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CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

TWENTY-SECOND PSALM.

BY THE

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PERPETUAL CURATE OF CURY AND GUNWALLOE, CORNWALL.

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THE

TWENTY-SECOND PSALM.

¶ To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, a Psalm of David.

1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so* far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring?

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

3 But thou *art* holy, *O thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,

8 He trusted on the Lord *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breast.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help.

12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.

13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

16 For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

17 I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.

18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. (*Or*, Save me from the lion's mouth, and from the horns of the unicorns. Thou hast heard me.) *See Note, p.* 197.

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

INTRODUCTORY EPISTLE.

Christian Readers,

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord! May you be "partakers of his sufferings," only in such measure as shall prepare you to bear "his exceeding weight of glory." The constant aim of the Apostle, should be ours also:—to "know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and to be made conformable unto his death," Phil. iii. 10. "All Christians have been taught in one school," says an admirable author; "all have known the power of affliction in some of its varied forms, of inward conflict, or outward trouble. 'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now,' is each of them ready to say, 'but now have I kept thy word.' I never prized it before. I could indeed scarcely be said to know it. I never understood its comfort until affliction expounded it to me. I never till now saw its suitableness in my case."*

Is this the reader's experience? In some measure we trust it is, for we must all bear the cross before we can wear the crown. The "Book of Consolations" is peculiarly fitted to the *disconsolate.* The Saviour's gift of a "Comforter" is highly prized by the members of his Church when they are left *comfortless.* Whensoever, then, amid your trials, you turn to that Book, lift up your heart in secret earnest prayer for this gift. You shall thus obtain a double benefit by your affliction; the Spirit will open your understanding to understand the Scriptures, and the key of spiritual knowledge thus put into your hand will open to you the Sanctuary of Chirstian sympathy, where you shall find the man of sorrows, whose tears will mingle with yours, and the sight of whose agonies will cause you to forget your own.

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* Bridges on Psalm cxix. ver. 67. See also ver. 71.

The twenty-second psalm sets him before us in the darkest hour of his earthly history. His loud cry of agony attracts our attention to the passage in which it was foretold, and insensibly our minds are led on to the perusal of the whole psalm. It proves to be emphatically one of those passages in which the prophets, by the Spirit of Christ within them, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. Thus the psalm beguiles the sorrow of the Christian, by exhibiting the untold sorrows of his Lord, and elevates his mind above all earthly trials as he proceeds, by making him a partaker, through hope, of the glory that is yet to be revealed. With his stripes our souls are healed, Isa. liii. 5. We cannot murmur when we contemplate such an unmurmuring Master. Who will love sin any longer, after he has seen how it has pierced his Saviour? How can we call our afflictions severe, when we "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself?" Heb. xii. 3.

The Author desires to commend this psalm of the Redeemer's sorrow and joy to the frequent and attentive perusal of his fellow Christians. This humble endeavour to unfold some of its contents, he designs only for those hours of spiritual depression, or of domestic or personal affliction, when, criticism being disarmed, the reader looks only for a few simple words of consolation, or would seek to lose remembrance of his sorrows in contemplating those of the deeply tried fellow sufferer. He feels that much has been left unsaid. But as the volume is already larger than was anticipated, his object will be accomplished if the views here presented may, through the gracious Spirit, impart consolation even to a single individual, and by their imperfection incite others to turn aside and comtemplate for themselves this great sight, which a saint of old beheld under the appropriate emblem of "a bush burning and not consumed," Exodus iii. 2.

As the psalm does not refer to the whole of the period in which our blessed Lord hung upon the cross, the reader is requested to set before his mind part of the previous history and circumstances. It is supposed that our divine Surety was crucified about, or not long after, nine o'clock in the morning. Immediately on his being nailed to the cross, we conceive that our merciful High Priest prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. After he had hung some little time on the cross, our Lord affectionately consigned his mother to the care of the beloved disciple John, saying to the one, "Behold thy son," and to the other, "Behold thy mother," John xix. 26, 27. Next after this, and before midday, it is probable that our Lord accepted the prayer of the penitent thief with this gracious assurance, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43. At the sixth hour, that is, in our reckoning, at twelve o'clock, the supernatural darkness commenced. Instead of meridian brightness, there was a solemn gloom for about three hours. The moon being then at the full, the darkness could not possibly be caused by an eclipse, which, besides, never continues for so long a period. From twelve o'clock till three our blessed Lord appears to have been silent, enduring a great inward conflict. About the ninth hour, that is, about three o'clock, he gave utterance to his feelings in the first words of this psalm, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" From this we infer that he applied the psalm to himself. And as it was usual at that period for the Hebrews to quote the commencement of a psalm in an audible manner, in order that those around might join in its mental or vocal repetition, we have some reason to conclude that our dying Redeemer occupied his thoughts with "speaking to himself," and to God, in the words of this psalm, Eph. v. 19. The applicability of every sentence of it to his condition, strengthens that opinion. This is the view attempted to be set forth in the following exposition.* We conceive that our Lord, while under the darkness and desertion, repeated, after his loud cry, the remainder of this psalm, and that in the 19th, 20th, and 21st verses, he plead so importunately for the immediate return of his Father's comforting presence, that light brake forth instantly, and then he mentally exclaimed, "Thou hast heard me!" The supernatural gloom was dispelled from the face of nature, and the light and peace of the Father's countenance were restored to the heart of Christ. In gratitude and joy our Lord continued to repeat to himself the remainder of the psalm; expressly declared that "God hath not hid his face from him," verse 24; and he affirmed his determination to "pay his vows." As he repeated this thought of the 25th verse, we conceive that in accordance with it, Jesus exclaimed, "I thirst," for St. John informs us that this was prompted rather by a sense of duty, than an impulse of nature. Continuing the course of the psalm, the Saviour's heart was comforted with the vision of joy that was set before him, Heb. xii. 2. He saw of the travail of his soul, Isa. liii. 11, and was satisfied to witness the whole earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of

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* While preparing this for the press, the author met with "A Plain Exposition of the New Testament," by the Rev. Thomas Boys, M.A., and feels happy to refer the reader to that excellent volume for a similar view given of this psalm in the comments on the 19th chapter of St. John.

God, and all nations rendering the homage of Christian worship, ver. 27—29. He beheld his seed celebrating his righteousness through time and through eternity, and exulting in the glorious truth that he had perfectly "fulfilled it," ver. 31. Here the psalm terminates, and we conceive that our blessed Master, as if satisfied with this sight, and conscious that all the work of suffering and of obedience in his mortal life was completed, now gave utterance to the second "loud voice," and, in accordance with this everlasting testimony of his Church, exclaimed, "It is finished!" Having said this, the Saviour of the world bowed his head, and of his own accord gave up that life which no man could take from him, John x. 18: for, breathing out his soul, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," Luke xxiii. 46.

This psalm depicts the Saviour's condition, and unfolds his mental history, from the period of the first loud cry to that of the second. It opens with sorrow, and concludes with joy. Its time is but those few minutes which its meditative and deliberate perusal would occupy. It commences with that most severe of all his trials, the hiding of his Father's face, and terminates with a vision of his everlasting felicity in his Church. The change in the middle of the psalm is most important and consolatory. It teaches that the Redeemer did not die under darkness. It assures us that his latest moments were those of peace and communion, not of perturbation and estrangement. The Christian's heart rejoices to know that his adorable and gracious Lord departed not out of this life in bitter anguish of spirit, complaining that his Father had forsaken him, but in gratitude and exultation of soul, testifying that he had not hid his face from him, but had heard and answered his petition, verse 24.

We are now, Christian reader, about to consider the most important and mysterious part of our Lord's important and mysterious life. Yet let no Christian shrink from the contemplation of the "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. So far as it is "revealed," it "belongs unto us," Deut. xxix. 29. Remember, also, that there is nothing mysterious in itself. Knowledge, like the light, makes all things plain. Mystery is but a watchword of creature ignorance. As we advance from the lowest scale of being to the highest, we find that every rank calls that above it a mystery, and that beneath it a simplicity. God looks down from the height of being, and deems universal nature a simplicity. He only, whose name is "I am that I am," is the great mystery of eternity. "We shall understand all mysteries and all knowledge," 1 Cor. xiii. 2, but we shall be ever learning something further of the mystery of the Godhead, which passes knowledge. What we shall learn regarding God, shall instantly cease to be mysterious, and we shall plainly and fully comprehend it. What we shall not have learned concerning the Divine Being will appear so mysterious and wonderful, that the fresh zest of inquiry shall be kept eternally alive. Thus our reverential love and adoring admiration of God, shall be continually increasing, and the happiness of heaven augmenting without end. The ecstatic sensation of discovery, and the high delight of intelligent inquiry, will co-exist in our breasts, and impart to eternity the appearance and feeling neither of a past, nor of a future, but of a full and satisfactory present. If thus it shall prove in eternity, so ought it to be in time. "Grow," says the apostle, "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. iii. 18. The Spirit of light is promised by him as a guide into all truth. Let us, therefore, "search the Scriptures, for they testify of Jesus," John v. 39. The reading of the Word is one of the ordinances of God's appointment for the benefit of our souls. While engaged in its perusal, and at all times, let us constantly pray that God would "illuminate our minds and understandings with the bright beams of his Holy Spirit, that we may daily grow in the saving knowledge of the heavenly mystery of our redemption, wrought by our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*Lord Bacon's Prayers.* This Psalm brings that redemption, and this Saviour, vividly before our view. That its perusal may be accompanied with greater benefit, we would humbly suggest the following as topics for meditation.

Endeavour to bring fully before your mind, First, the Sufferer, the Lord Jesus Christ, God over all, in your nature, dying as your Surety. Second, the Cause of suffering, sin; your sin, and the sin of the world. Third, the Agents, the Law, Satan, Man, and God. Fourth, the Reality of Christ's sufferings; not a mere appearance of sorrow, but a real, acute, and exquisite sense of bodily agony, and of mental anguish. Fifth, the Place, Golgotha, the hill of skulls—Calvary, the mount without the walls of Jerusalem, where criminals were put to death. Sixth, the Circumstances; a public execution,—three crosses, and three crucified thereon,—two for theft,—one in the midst, for sedition and blasphemy, even Jesus our blessed Saviour, condemned alike in the spiritual and criminal courts of his native country: his back, excoriated by the scourge, pressing on the wood, his hands and his feet pierced with nails, his sufferings mocked, his character vilified, his strength exhausted, his soul deserted, and his spirit assailed by the temptations of Satan.

When these have been well considered, endeavour next to enter into the feelings of that Holy One, who endured them all. Consider the UNPARALLELED POSI-

TION in which the blessed Jesus found himself placed when hanging on the cross. Contemplate this position, and his feelings, in reference, First, to his own Godhead and manhood. When the Second Person in the Holy Trinity took our nature upon him, he did not lay aside his Godhead; he laid aside only the exhibition of its glorious presence and power. In all his words and miracles, he spake and acted by the power of the Father and the Holy Ghost. He glorified God by an invariable reference to him. "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works," John xiv. 10. Now, also on the cross, when his body and soul sunk to their lowest possible condition, he would not have recourse to his own Godhead power to rescue and deliver them, but waited patiently upon his Father in the exercise of faith and prayer. He sought not the glory of deliverance for himself. He kept the Almighty power of his Godhead in silent union with the utter weakness of his manhood, and suffered not the accuser to say that he used undue advantage in the combat.

Second, in reference to God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. These two persons in the Sacred Trinity rejoiced in God the Son's taking our nature. During his life on earth, they had uninterrupted and intimate communion with him, in his human soul; but when the sin of the world was laid upon that body and soul which Jesus offered up on the cross, they judicially withdrew their comforting presence, and refrained from communing with him in that human soul. Observe that it was only *judicially*. Christ was still dear to the heart of the Father. Nay, if possible, most dear now, because most obedient. And mark this, that he took our *nature into* union with his Godhead, but only took our *sin upon* that humanity which he had appropriated to himself. Sin could not be taken *into* his holy nature, no more than darkness can be taken into light. But it was laid *upon* him by imputation, and because he had taken it upon him, he suffered all that it deserved. The desertion was a judicial act on the part of God towards sin. Christ suffered that desertion of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, because he had made himself to be sin for us, 2 Cor. v. 21. The wrath of God, therefore, is by no means to be regarded as directed against the bearer, but only against the burden. Yet, because he bound it fast upon him, he did actually suffer that desertion which it merited.

Third, in reference to the angels. These ministering spirits were not allowed to draw near to the dying and deserted Jesus. Even that angel who had strengthened him in Gethsemane was compelled to close his half-spread wing, and leave him all alone. Christ, at this moment, was a solitary in the universe of being.

Fourth, in reference to the Law. The Son of God had made himself to be born under the law, Gal. iv. 4, and now he was dying under its curse, chap. iii. 13. The shame and infamy of being hanged on a tree, was the last and most severe of all the curses which the law of God and man denounced, Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

Fifth, in reference to man. Though bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, there was no man that would help him. His own disciples had fled, and a host of enemies and bitter revilers now surrounded him, and with cruel hatred nailed him to the tree.

Lastly, in reference to devils. "This was the hour and power of darkness," Luke xxii. 53. If a legion of evil spirits could possess the body of one demoniac, (Mark v. 9; Matt. xii. 45,) who shall number the hosts which Satan brought against the Captain of our salvation? Heb. ii. 10. It was necessary that he should be tried in all points. The Adversary must not have it in his power to say that the Son of Man had not been fairly, or fully, tried: no room for his insinuation must be left, that Christ would have fallen like the fathers, if he had only been tempted and tried as they were. Therefore Christ was expressly "led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil." Matt. iv. 1. "Consider that immaculate Lamb tempted by Satan to distrust his Father's care, and turn the stones into bread; then to presume upon that care, and cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple; and then to deny his Father altogether, and worship the devil in preference! How horrible must such suggestions be to his holy soul!"—*Simeon's Sermons.* Now, while being crucified through weakness, 2 Cor. xiii. 4, he gave himself, and was given by the Father and the Holy Spirit, into the hand of the Powers of Darkness, that, defeating all their attempts, he might triumph over them openly, Col. ii. 15. This was the hour of which the Saviour forewarned his disciples on the previous evening. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," John xiv. 30. It is probable that Satan led on his grand attack, under cover of the darkness. Doubtless as an experienced general, he would seize the most favourable moment. No sooner had the comforting presence of God been withdrawn from the Redeemer, than the prince of the fallen spirits would summon them to the assault. Rulers, principalities, and powers, every fiend and evil spirit of hell, came round the holy human soul of Jesus, and did their utmost, during these three hours of darkness, to gain an entrance; but not one of them could find any thing in Christ congenial to their own natures, on which to work. As hovering cavalry in the battle, by desperate charges, attempt to break the square of the enemy, so these spiritual foes, rushing at all points, and with all kinds of temptations, upon this only solid square of holiness which our world has ever seen, received that defeat themselves which they intended to give, and fell back with a recoil of everlasting dismay. It was not by an exertion of his almighty strength that the Saviour prevailed, but by his invincible holiness, and trust in God. In the world of spirits, good and evil are as repugnant and hostile to each other, as fire and water are in this world of matter. The presence, therefore, of a perfectly holy being on our earth, must have proved a source of constant misery to Satan and his evil spirits. Observe how they dread his approach, cry out at the sound of his voice, and address him by that name which was most cognizable to their own apprehensions and abhorrence: "We know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God," Mark i. 24; Luke iv. 34. It was his holiness from which they shrunk; and it was by his unsullied holiness that he proved more than a conqueror over them in death.

Let, then, this unparalleled situation in which your Lord and Saviour was placed, while hanging on the cross, be more and more fully realized by frequent meditation. Remember, that he was tried in all points like as we are, yet without sin, Heb. iv. 15. This was the last trial to which he was subjected, as the Foundation-stone of that eternal temple which God was about to lay. "Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone," Isa. xxviii. 16. The prince of this world, and all the powers of darkness tried it, AND FOUND NOTHING. Man tried it with every ordeal he could think of, AND FOUND NOTHING. The law tried it with its ten commandments, and its sharpest curse, AND FOUND NOTHING. God the Father, and God the Spirit, tried it by the severest test of their withdrawal, AND FOUND NOTHING. Consider what must have been the holy Saviour's feelings while enduring this unexampled trial!

Meditate much and often on the sufferings of your

Lord: You may thus need less personal suffering to teach you to hate the sin that caused them. In all his afflictions be thou afflicted. Be not estranged in sympathy from the best friend of your soul. Live only to be like him. Let the first desire of your heart be fixed on the attainmemt of holiness. All the bitter sorrows which your Surety endured for you, were intended to deliver you from the pollution of sin. All your own personal afflictions are designed to make you "partakers of his holiness," Heb. xii. 10. Seek, then, earnestly seek, after holiness. The noblest and most exalted wish which the heart can entertain, is, that it may be made pure and holy. The sullied streamlet hastens to sink every impurity, and to flow on in the limpid transparency of its fountain-head. Look ever to the Fountain Head of your everlasting being. Think often of the unsullied purity of the Divine nature, of which even the lucid light is an inadequate representation. Then turn and meditate on what thou hast become by sin; defiled in mind and conscience, Tit. i. 15; in heart by evil thoughts, covetousness, deceit, an evil or envious eye, pride, foolishness, not to mention grosser offences, Mark vii. 21, 22; James iii. 6. Pray to the Spirit of holiness to teach you to hate this defiled condition of your nature. Pray to be enabled to "see" so much of the purity of "God," that like Job you may at last be brought to "abhor" yourself, Job xlii. 6. That this self-abhorrence and inward sorrow may work not death, but repentance to salvation, 2 Cor. vii. 10, still pray for the Spirit of holiness to enable you to look upon Him whom you have pierced. The bitterness of your mourning for him, Zech. xii. 12, will, by the quickening Spirit, awaken within you a holy gratitude that he should have mourned for you. This grand proof of his love will constrain you to live no longer to yourself, but to him that died for you, and rose again, 2 Cor. v. 14. The promises of his grace will incite you to "cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1. And the words of your God and Redeemer, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 16, will obtain an universal response from every part of your nature, "Your heart and flesh will cry out for the living God," Psa. lxxxiv. 2. Look ever upward. The Saviour's address to each of us is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Let us never turn away from the contemplation of the Saviour's sorrow and the Saviour's glory. By "looking unto Jesus," the Christain rises, like the nautilus, from his dark and native depths, to the pure atmosphere and warm sunshine of an upper world, spreads forth his tiny sails of faith, and hope, and love, and is gently wafted over the waters of life by the balmy gales of grace. Onward he glides, beautiful in movement, and joyful in his new existence, so long as the heavy waters of this world are excluded: that moment he imbibes them he sinks. Be not conformed, then, dear Christian readers, to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, Rom. xii. 2. Seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, Col. iii. 1. That the Spirit of Christ may rest upon you, that the blessing of the Father of mercies may descend on you, and that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, ye also may all appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 4, is the earnest prayer of your grateful and humble servant in the gospel,

THE AUTHOR.

THE TITLE OF THE PSALM.

¶ *To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar*, (*or*, *the hind of the morning*, margin ;) *a Psalm of David.*

VARIOUS opinions are entertained by the learned in reference to those titles which stand prefixed to the majority of the Psalms. The safest conclusion is, that where they do not explain themselves, we must regard every other explanation as entirely conjectural. Such titles, as, for instance, among others, those of Psalms 3, 57, 60, 92, must be kept in view by every reader who would understand them fully. The circumstances in which they were written, and the object they were intended to serve, are thus communicated at a glance. But there are many titles, like that before us, to which, at this distant day, it is impossible to attach a definite and indisputable signification.

This title may be understood, as in the text, in reference to an instrument called "Aijeleth Shahar," upon which this psalm was to be played by the chief Musician. Others give an English translation to these Hebrew terms, as in the margin, and conclude that David gave this Psalm to the chief Musician, as one which he had written "concerning the hind of the morning," in allusion to the Messiah, who was cruelly hunted to death, but who escaped from the hands of the wicked in the morning of the resurrection. It appears incongruous that a feminine noun and emblem should be employed where the Messiah is intended, and therefore others give an entirely different translation to this title. In harmony with the Chaldee Paraphrast, and following Aquila and Jerome, they understand the term "Lemanetsach," "To the chief Musician," in the general sense of excelling, and not necessarily as limited to excellency in one department only, as that of music. They therefore interpret it, "To the Triumpher—To the Victor, or Giver of Victory, and, To the Conqueror." In this latter sense, Parkhurst and Bishop Horsley receive it, and the terms "Aijeleth Shahar," they render, "Concerning the interposition of the dusk," or such darkness as prevails at dawn of day. "The scene of this Psalm is the crucifixion of Christ," says Parkhurst, "when the Divine Light appeared *almost* overwhelmed by the interposing powers of darkness, and when the *sun*, sympathising with his great *antitype*, was darkened for three hours, and afforded to all believers a sensible and affecting image of what the *Sun of Righteousness* then endured." Compare Luke xxii. 53, with xxiii. 44, 45. See also Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon, p. 617.

Could strict criticism maintain this interpretation, we should request the reader to receive it without hesitation. It harmonizes with the view we have taken of the Psalm, from its own internal evidence, and furnishes this idea, that the darkness at the crucifixion was not total, but such as exists at the earliest part of the morning. We are compelled, however, to conclude that though most interesting and appropriate, it is only an ingenious and beautiful conjecture.

"A Psalm of David." David, as the author of this and other Psalms, may be regarded in a fourfold view. 1. As a prophet, inspired by the Holy Ghost to utter the mind and will of God. 2. As a man, expressing the thoughts, the wants, and feelings, which existed in his breast, or were suggested by his circumstances. 3. As a type of Messiah, and, 4. As a pattern of believers. In the inditing of this Psalm, we regard him in the first view. As we become partakers of Christ's sufferings, by sanctified personal experience of trial and sorrows, so believers and prophets of old were admitted to the same fellowship, in the same manner. While each inspired prophet wrote as he felt, and attached his own meaning to his own words, the Spirit of God directed these feelings and these words, according to his own high design. It hence became a deeply interesting occupation to these prophets to inquire and search diligently what the Spirit within them did signify, by that which he had inspired them to write, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. This, also, is our happy employment in the perusal of the Old Testament. "Search the Scriptures," says our blessed Saviour, "for they are they which testify of ME," John v. 39. It was the great object of his own ministry to expound the reference which these Scriptures bore to himself, Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44; iv. 17—21. The apostles and evangelists invariably interpreted them with the same reference, Acts ii. 25; iii. 18; xiii. 32, 33; viii. 35. And the pen of inspiration has declared that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," Rev. xix. 10. Adhering to this scripturally prescribed *subject* of exposition, we have not alluded to the circumstances of David as the *author* of the Psalm; nor indeed is it possible now to determine the time or circumstances in which it was composed, nor shall we trouble the reader wtth the various conjectures which have been formed. We have thought it more important to consider the Psalm purely in its prophetic import, and to fix the attention of the reader, without distraction, upon the SAVIOUR. For David being a prophet, and knowing that Christ would be raised up, and seeing these things beforehand, spake of HIS sufferings, and foretold HIS glory. Compare Acts ii. 30, 31, with 1 Pet. i. 11.

Tuesday 18th [illegible]

CHRIST ON THE CROSS IN DARKNESS.

THE CRY.

VERSE 1.—*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

How solemn, how mysterious, O Christian! are these affecting words! They absorb the mind; they overpower the heart! The view they present is almost too awful to be realized. It is difficult to persuade ourselves of the two facts which they imply. Can it be true, that the Father of mercies forsakes any human being on this side of the grave? Is it possible, that when deserted by the great God, man can address him in the language of affiance?

Go to Golgotha, Christian. Behold the amazing reality. Learn the unsearchable mystery. God's last and severest infliction, and faith's strongest and highest act, are being there displayed. Let the evangelists conduct thee in thought to Mount Calvary. Imagine thyself to have been present when the great atonement was offered. That was the judgment-day of the Saviour of the world. At the tribunals of men he was condemned —under their sentence he was being executed: and while his body hung in torture on the cross, he was arraigned in spirit before the bar of God, under the imputation of human guilt. The court of heaven descended, as it were, to Mount Calvary, the strong voice from the cross rends the veil that hides the unseen world from our view. We behold the great God at the dread moment when the last sentence has been pronounced. These awful words, "Let the law take its course," have just been uttered. The eternal Judge appears with his face turned away, as if about to leave the throne of justice, unable to exercise the Divine prerogative of mercy. An agonizing cry thrills every heart, arrests every attention, "El-i, El-i, lama sabacthani—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Inquiring angels and men ask, Who is this that is condemned? and with unutterable astonishment they learn that it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God,—He who had always loved and served his Father; whose filial heart had never swerved from its allegiance; whose whole life, from his cradle to this dying moment, was one uninterrupted flow of holy love and obedience. It is this Jesus, who in the beginning was with God, who is God; who is the only begotten, the beloved of the Father, that utters this astounding cry, Matt. xxvii. 46, and Mark xv. 34.

Whom does he address? His own Father, from whose bosom he had come forth. He who had sent angels to minister unto him; who had never before "left him alone, being always with him," John xvi. 32.—He whose voice had twice been heard from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5, even He was now withdrawn.

How does he implore his return? First, with a *sudden*, *loud*, and *piercing cry*. Christ had been silent from the commencement of the darkness. The conflict was inward, deep, and overpowering. He was dumb; he opened not his mouth. For nearly three hours he uttered not a word. At last his grief burst forth. He could be silent no longer. With a loud cry he gave vent to his sorrow. That voice was not more audible to the ears of his murderers, than it was piercing to the heart of his disciples and of his Father. Devils, too, heard his cry of unshaken faith. They perceived how he could appeal to his Father against all their insinuations. They were dismayed and seized with despair. Men were struck with wonder at his still remaining strength. Mary and her believing companions must have felt that cry thrill within their inmost hearts. And surely to his own Father in heaven it must have come with persuasive and affecting force; for it was the most doleful cry he had ever heard from a human voice.

Secondly, With the language of *adoption;* with the *confidence of faith.* "My God, my God." This is not the agonizing cry of a creature struggling with an unknown power, and amid its anxious efforts to escape, reiterating O God, O God. It is the cry of a child seeking to be rescued from the grasp of foes; looking towards a distant parent, and sending across an intervening gulf the fervent appeal of its confiding claim. It is the cry of conscious innocence, which knows not a cause for estrangement, which casts itself upon the being it loves, and thinks not of a repulse. It is the cry of one suddenly surrounded by circumstances never before experienced. The outpouring of a deep, inward, long-pent grief. The unburdening of a heart which but for words would break, which but for faith would never gain relief, or cry, "My God, my God."

Thirdly, With the accent of *interrogation.* "Why hast thou forsaken me? Which of these words bears most of the emphasis of the Saviour's meaning? Does he denounce the act? Does he say, "Why hast thou *forsaken* me?" By no means. For if Job could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15; much more may Jesus declare, "Though he forsake me, yet will I submit." Does he set forward self? "Why hast thou forsaken *me?*" Such language was altogether foreign to his lip. The meek intonations of the Saviour's voice were never swollen with the emphasis of egotism. He who was lowly in heart never once urged a single personal consideration as an argument with God or man. Concerning what, then, does the Redeemer principally inquire? First, as to the reason, *Why, for what* hast thou forsaken me? Brought, as he was now, before a new tribunal, and experiencing a new infliction, our Lord, by this interrogation, maintains his innocence, challenges his adversaries to the proof, and inquires of the great Judge, what, and whether any, new charge has been preferred against him. Christ had been cleared at both judgment seats, even though condemned. In the spiritual court, when the contradictory testimony of false witnesses could substantiate nothing against him, the Saviour challenged the closest investigation, and called on Caiaphas to make impartial and full inquiry, John xviii. 21. In the criminal court, he needed not to utter a word in his own behalf, for even the judge pronounced him to be guiltless. "Pilate took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it," Matt. xxvii. 24. But now that the Redeemer is brought before the judgment-seat of his Father, under the imputation of human guilt, and beholds the face of the Judge turned away from him, and that neither man nor angel offers a word on his behalf, he is entitled, and it fully becomes him, nay, in justice he is bound, to declare his innocence, and to demand if any new accusation has been laid to his charge.—My God, my God, for what reason hast thou forsaken me?

Secondly, our Lord inquires as to the person, Why hast THOU forsaken me? This was his burden; this his grief. God was absent from him. His own Father was withdrawn; and no cause had occurred to prevent his presence more than had previously existed.

Fully did our Saviour know, and exquisitely did he feel the truth of that Scripture, "In God's favour is life," Psa. xxx. 5. Under the hidings of his Father's face, the only begotten Son must have experienced what no human intellect can conceive, and which, if it did, no human language could express. One point in it, however, ought particularly to be noticed as important in itself, and as throwing light on this interrogation. It is, that this was an entirely new sensation, by which our Lord was now tried. For more than thirty years of his human life, the Redeemer possessed a blessed consciousness of his Father's presence, his Father's love. No changeableness or shadow of turning had ever been exhibited towards him. Even in the garden of Gethsemane, the bitterness of the cup was mitigated, the darkness of the night was relieved, because there was one present there, to whom he could go and say, "My Father." But he had hung upon the cross for nigh six hours; and now from midday, when the sun ought to have shone most brightly, the darkness had been increasing. For almost three hours it had continued; and with the outward, the inward darkness seems to have commenced and terminated. The hiding of the sun accompanied and typified the hiding of the Father's countenance. As the one was new in the history of the world, so was the other in that of Christ. No natural eclipse—no overspreading cloud—no mere gloom of a temporary fog, occasioned that darkness. Neither was it pains of body—nor desertion of friends—nor exhaustion of spirit—nor the impatience of discontent—nor the despondency of unbelief, that overspread the mind of our Immanuel with this feeling of loneliness. It was a supernatural obscuration of the solar light, that enveloped the land with greyish darkness; and it was a judicial withdrawal of the light of God's countenance, that overcame the human soul of Jesus with this strange and overpowering sensation. The pains of crucifixion, the forsaking of friends, the taunts of men, and the assaults of devils, were nothing in comparison with this. For almost six hours the powers of darkness had assailed his spirit with every variety of temptation. Men and devils availed themselves of the opportunity. His hour of weakness, 2 Cor. xiii. 4, was their "hour of power," Luke xxii. 53. Outwardly and inwardly the "fiery darts," Eph. vi. 16, were thrust at him. Neither God the Father, nor God the Spirit, appeared for his help. Instead of exercising his own Godhead power to annihilate his foes in a moment, Christ presented to them the broad shield of faith and breastplate of righteousness, and stood unmoved amid their fiercest onsets, immaculate in his own holiness. Dreadfully assaulted as we read he was by man, he was doubtless more strongly assailed by spiritual foes. But he took no advantage over them from his almighty strength. He entered the combat as the second Adam; allowed his enemies to exhaust their utmost efforts of temptation; gave himself into their hands as one whom they could cause to die, but could not cause to sin; and by exhibiting the power of a pure and holy will, rejecting all and every kind of temptation, he rose where the first Adam fell, and proved himself to be "the Holy One of God."

It is obvious that our Lord must have *felt* the trial. His human soul was incessantly called upon to reject innumerable and never-ending temptations. His body was quivering in every nerve—proud and taunting men encircled his cross—fierce and wicked spirits surrounded his human soul, which now enjoyed no sensible communion with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Dark ness, spiritual and material, enveloped him;—neither angels nor disciples afforded him the slightest aid in this last and awful conflict. No wonder, then, that he was speechless from the sixth hour until the ninth. His human soul was engrossed with its unprecedented situation —it was bruised under the forsaking of God,—harassed with the assaults of foes, and oppressed with the agonizings of the flesh. His heart is so sore broken, that he cannot speak. But at last, when the fury of the enemy abates, and the first halt of their despairing efforts yields him breath, he exclaims, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

When Christ here speaks of his being "forsaken," he means that he was under a suspension of that joyful and intimate communion with the Most High, which he had always enjoyed up to this moment. God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, had withdrawn all sensible influence from Christ's human nature. He therefore speaks according to that nature, because he felt according to it—he *felt* as a *man*. The great object of his life on earth, was not to glorify himself, but his Father; therefore in all his miracles, we find him either calling on the Father's name, or acknowledging his power, or informing his disciples that the Father who dwelt in him did the works, John xiv. 10. Though possessing almighty power, it was his voluntary choice and determined purpose, not to avail himself of it on every occasion, but to live as a man acting in constant dependence upon God, and so to become a pattern or example for us to follow. Instead of opposing his omnipotence to blast all his enemies, he presented his innate holiness and simple trust on God, as that in which he could withstand all their assaults. And whether the sunshine of divine love be round him, or darkness and desertion envelop body and soul, he retains the same holy, confiding, and filially affianced heart that he had before. In the 42d chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, the Father thus directs our attention to the Son: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him;" and again, in the 5th and 6th verses, he directly addresses the Son: "I will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." Christ in the flesh is thus exhibited to us in two respects. First, as one whom God "upholds." And secondly, as one in whom his soul "delights." And the covenant which the Father stipulates to perform with and for the Son, is also set before us in a twofold view. First, "that he will hold his hand" and "keep" him. And secondly, that he "will give him for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." This passage of Scripture was doubtless well known to the Saviour. It formed, with many others, his title-deed and security in this great work of redemption. He not only knew it in the letter, he knew it also in the spirit. He had experienced its truth. He had tested its accuracy. He had for thirty years lived in the enjoyment of all that it promised him. Sweetly and blessedly did the human soul of Jesus of Nazareth feel itself "upheld" by God. Not a moment was he destitute of the conscious "putting" and "resting" of the Spirit upon him. Every step in life the Son took, he found himself "kept" by omnipotent power, and by omniscient wisdom. His hand was held in a Father's grasp; and scarcely a day passed in which he was not able to say to some sin-darkened soul, "I am given to be the light of the world." Endeavour to realize to your mind the heavenly sensations of such a life as this. Its fulness of blessedness is greater than can be conceived. Set vividly, however, before your mind what little you can apprehend, and then imagine it to be suddenly suspended.

The same Jesus that had enjoyed the whole of what God had promised, and of what God is, was now deprived of the comfort of these promises, and of the enjoyment of God's presence. Instead of upholding, he felt a withdrawal—instead of delightful communion, there was silence and desertion—instead of strengh, weakness—instead of light, darkness—instead of the Spirit, heaviness and oppression. Let us not imagine that the Father had ceased virtually to uphold the Son, or that his soul had now no delight in him. It could not be so. He was still surely, though not sensibly, upholding him; he still felt the same delight in him. Nay, we may conceive that, if possible, love and approbation were increased in proportion as the obedience and dutifulness of the Son were exhibited. But God was not now holding him by the hand, and keeping him in *the same sensible manner* in which he had always done before. It was necessary that he who was the "child born" should also be proved to be the "mighty God." It was right, that he who had always glorified the Father's power, should now be glorified in his own. Therefore, God the Father, and God the Spirit, withdrew the manifestations of their nearness and power, that the Saviour might be left to the exercise of his own resources. "Therefore, his (own) arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an hemlet of salvation upon his head," Isa. lix. 16, 17. Panoplied in this armour of proof, he presented himself to the hosts of darkness. On his helmed head, and on his plated breast, he laid the sin of the world; and though the curse of the law, and the lightning of God's wrath, and the terrors of the judgment that condemned that sin, were let loose against it, yet could they not touch him, or penetrate that coat of mail. His holiness could stand. No weapon formed against him could prosper. Devils did their utmost to find the smallest opening; but his righteousness was perfect. They hated only the bearer—God hated only the burden. God's condemnation fell upon the load of imputed guilt. The strokes and shafts of the enemy were directed only against him who was taking it away. But the Saviour so held fast the sin that was laid upon him, that no distinction could be made. What the Father and the law directed against the sin, must needs fall on him: and what devils and men aimed at the Bearer, could not make him seek a disencumbered advantage in the conflict, by letting go the burden that oppressed him, but rather hastened him forward to that tomb where he would deposit it for ever, and lay it out of the way from between God and man.

It was when left alone in this terrible conflict, that our Lord cried to his Father with this loud voice. He grieved not at the sorest of his other trials. For thousands of years he would be willing to endure them; but to be excluded from the light of his Father's countenance for a moment longer than was absolutely necessary, was what he could not and would not allow. Therefore he cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Let us now consider the succeeding parts of this verse, as they stand in one connected whole, with the first. They seem to be explanatory, as well as additional exclamations; and assist us in understanding the meaning of our Lord's mysterious cry. We learn by them that he does not seek to exert his own Godhead power, and secure the glory of the victory to himself;—that it is no selfish cry, but one prompted by a filial desire to be helped of his Father, that the mighty Helper may have all the praise. And that it is not so much for his own satisfaction that he makes this inquiry, as for that of the members of his church, who thus learn at once two amazing facts: first, that their Lord was forsaken on the cross; and, being hereby incited to inquire the reason, learn, in the second place, that he was forsaken on their account.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" Here there are three inquiries. First, Why hast thou forsaken me? second, Why art thou so far from helping me? third, And from the words of my roaring? The appropriate answers to each of these furnish suitable and abundant matter for consideration.

First, Why hast thou forsaken me? Answer, Because thou art bearing the sins of the world, John i. 29. It has been truly said, no man knows the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but he who learns it at the cross of Christ. That God should have so loved the world, as to give forth his own Son from his bosom on its behalf, teaches us how full and tender is his compassion towards fallen men. That the death of that Son should have been necessary before we could be saved, proves the inflexible justice of the righteous Judge, who will not suffer his laws to be broken with impunity. But when that Son was dying on the cross, that the Father should hide his face from him, because of our iniquity, proves how revolting sin is to the holy nature of God.

It was *sin* which caused this new and strange sensation in the heart of Christ. "The Lord had now laid, or caused to meet on him, the iniquities of us all," Isa. liii. 6. The victim was placed on the altar, and our guilt transferred to his innocent head. Though Christ voluntarily placed himself in our room; though men regarded him as a sinner; yet till now he had not been so treated by his Father. It is written, "the Lord made his soul an offering for sin," Isa. liii. 10. The human soul of Jesus was offered, was given by the Persons of the Sacred Trinity on account of sin. The atonement is not only a plan of infinite wisdom, whereby the various attributes of the Godhead are brought into beautiful harmony—wherein "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psa. lxxxv. 10. —whereby "God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 26; but it is a sacrifice of something of infinite value; it is a costly gift—the gift of that pure and holy human soul, as well as of that spotless body, which God the Son had taken into union with himself. As that "prepared body" was visibly made an atoning sacrifice on the cross, as on an altar, so also was that holy soul made an offering for sin after an invisible and spiritual manner. As that body went down into the grave of the earth, and was raised again to burst asunder the bonds of death: so that soul was delivered for sin under the grave of the curse, that it might rise again and deliver us from the power of spiritual death. The curse was, separation from the joy and light of God's countenance. This is what we deserve. Into this we fell; but could not raise ourselves. Therefore, the Son of God took a human body and a human soul, and placed himself in this our fallen separated state—came under the curse—was excluded from God's presence,—but did make for himself, and for us, a way, a glorious way, out of spiritual death into spiritual life, out of the state of banishment, into that of union, peace, and joy. The atonement, therefore, is not a mere arrangement—not a mere contrivance for the adjustment of a difficult question. It is a matter of fact—a reality—an actual substitution—a real purchase, at an immeasurable expense on the part of the Godhead. The Father and the blessed Spirit gave the Son, and the Son gave himself, for man. During all the period of his life THEY were with him, rejoicing and communing with him in his human soul. But here on the cross, they gave up that human soul—they ceased their communing with it—they made it their offering, and Jesus made it his offering, for sin. Thus sin, which is a spiritual evil, as well as temporal—the law, which has a spiritual and temporal power—and man, the sinner, who has a spiritual and material nature—were fully and severally met in each of these respects, by the spiritual offering of the soul, and the temporal, visible, and material offering of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it was when this spiritual offering was being made, that our Lord experienced strange, new, and awful sensations. He had descended voluntarily into the very depths of the curse—tasted its every bitterness—and with this loud and agonizing cry, commenced his ascent upwards from a condition in which his soul could not and would not remain.

It was necessary that Christ should be acknowledged by God the Father as the sin-bearer, otherwise his suretyship could not avail for us. And so far as we know, the only mode by which a holy Being can express his recognition of a sinner, or of a sinner's surety, is by turning from him, and causing the laws to be put in force against him. Thus did the Father act towards the Son; that so sin, even when seen on one with whom he had always been well pleased, should not be treated in the slightest degree as less odious than it really is. The turning away of God's countenance, or that Divine aversion which we so denominate, though unseen by mortal eyes, was doubtless marked by those countless intelligences of other worlds who behold it in unveiled glory. Our faculties are too limited to comprehend the vast design of God in this stupendous mystery of redemption. And we are generally too selfish to allow that its lessons extend far beyond ourselves. But angels inquiring into these things would learn, and in all his vast dominions created intelligences did learn, in this desertion of the crucified Son of God, that their Creator will by no means clear the guilty, Exod. xxxiv. 7. In the death of Jesus the myriads of superior beings would be taught that same lesson which God intended we should learn by the commandment, that "sin is exceeding sinful," Rom. vii. 13. Therefore, it "pleased the Lord to bruise him." He it was who "put him to grief," Isa. liii. 10. The spirit of Christ was wrung with anguish. We know how we feel under the charge of sin from man. How much more exquisitely must Christ have felt under the imputation of sin from God!

The imputation of sin to Christ is no idle tale. It is no fond unwarranted idea in the believer's mind;—a mere nominal transference, effected by the insertion of a few figures on the debit and credit side of the eternal reckoning. It was a real transaction between the Father and the Son. It was a business of life and death in which our Surety was engaged. Our case is certainly not an ideal one. Every day gives us fresh proofs by pain, sorrow, sickness, and death, that sin is something more than a mere word. We feel that we are bound under its curse. And when Christ undertook to deliver us, he was fully aware of this. He knew what he had undertaken; therefore he placed himself under the law, and under the curse of the law. He took up the burden of sin, yet he loathed it in his heart. He felt its odious weight upon his spirit, but having taken it, it was reckoned his. And the Father treated him accordingly. The Lord bruised him; God turned away from him; God refused for a time to speak with him. And Christ must have felt somewhat as we do when a fellow-creature lays a crime to our charge, and turns from us when we address him. In our case, the corruption of nature turns to our relief. The workings of pride and anger form a seasonable though sinful counteraction to our mortified feelings. But it could not be so with Christ

He tasted the unmitigated bitterness of the curse. His were unmixed feelings of sorrow. Sin itself grieved him. He mourned that God should have been so dishonoured. He hated it not merely in its consequences, but in its essence. He knew that the great Judge, before whom he stood, did not abhor him, but the burden which he bore. His own soul detested it in an equal degree. Yet he girt it so to him that no separation could be effected. He made himself so one with our case and cause, that all that we deserved lighted upon him. Let us keep this distinction clearly before our minds. Christ's person was still as holy and acceptable to the Father as before. The divine wrath could not, and did not, burn against him; but it waxed hot against the sins of man. And since Christ took these sins upon his own head, he must be content to suffer all the consequences which they entailed. And he was content to suffer all, and with a ready hand he took the cup and drank it to the dregs. But when he *had* drank that cup, and when he *had* wrung out its bitterest ingredients, he was not content—we speak it deliberately and with reverence—he was not content, neither was his Father, that it should be held to his lips for ever. He was now tasting a kind of spiritual death. As corporal death is the separation of the body from the soul, so spiritual death is the soul's separation from God. Here is the mystery of Christ's crucifixion and loud cry; that his human soul was separated from his Father's presence; that he was made to experience exclusion and banishment from God's face. But herein lies the mystery of our redemption by that crucifixion, that Christ was not willing to remain for ever separated from God; and by the energy of his own holiness did wrestle with an agonizing earnestness and importunity of entreaty till he was restored again to the enjoyment of that presence. He willingly endured that curse for us, and as willingly pressed back again into that presence from which he had suffered it to exclude him for a time. Let a mere man be once forsaken by his Creator, he never can recover himself. This is the grand prerogative of the God-man, that though submerged in the lowest depths, he can rise again by inherent power. "He has life in himself." Therefore, though the concentrated wrath of God were let loose against the sins of men, and while that wrath was not in the slightest degree diminished because these sins were taken up by One with whom the Father was well pleased, yet did it not cast the sinners that committed it into instant and eternal ruin, because one interposed himself who could bear up under it all. His power of holiness could sustain and bear away the double load of sin and of desertion, but his heart was broken under it. Say not that, being God, he could not feel, for remember what he exclaimed when the sins of the world were laid upon his head, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Second. "Why art thou so far from helping me?" Answer. That the victory may be altogether thine own.

Of the many remarkable points in the character of Christ our Saviour, his constant glorifying of God the Father is not the least worthy of observation. It is delightful to contemplate how filial reverence pervades every word and action of his life. His renunciation of self, his apparent forgetfulness that he had a separate existence to think of or to set forth ;—his full, cordial, and never omitted reference to his Father, as the power by whom he spake words of life, and wrought miracles of healing ; as the Being for whom alone he lived ; is the most perfect picture of sonship that the world has ever seen, or that the human mind can possibly conceive.

How plainly does he tell the Jews, "I can of my own self do nothing," John v. 30. When charged with having a devil, how meekly he replies, how like a son, "I have not a devil, but I honour my Father," John viii. 49. So entirely does he lose sight of self, so fully does he seem to recognize his own identity only in that of the Father, that he spake to his disciples as if they should also by this time be able to do the same, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him." How amazed, how almost indignant, is he at their contented ignorance, embodied in the answer of Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" for he exclaims, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works," John xiv. 9—11.

This living with, and for another, is the perfection of creature existence—that other being God. We find this principle fully exhibited in Scripture. The Father speaks and acts only through the Son and through the Spirit, that all men may honour both. Christ acted for the Father—the Father glorified the Son—the Spirit glorifies both. Christ takes of the things of the Father, and gives them unto us. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. And both the Father and the Son determine that sins against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven. The several Persons in the Sacred Name also bestow their threefold glory on the church, and the work of the church on earth is to glorify all the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Adam, the first member of the church, was created perfect, to live in God, and for Him alone. The perfection of Enoch, and cause of his translation, was this, that "he walked with God." Such, also, is the intended purpose, and ought to be the high and sole business, of *our* earthly life, as members with Adam and Enoch, and all the faithful, of his universal church. Then, too, what is the summing up of eternity? Is it not the church's admission to everlasting fellowship in glory, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? All those who acted for one another in time, acting with, and living in one another, in eternity.

To live for self, however, is the characteristic of fallen man. But when at any time he sacrifices self to another, as a servant for a master, a patriot for his country, he presents to his own mind the perfection of what he calls glorious and heroic. To give up our own interests or comfort for the happiness or preservation of another, is the noblest and highest act of generosity with which fallen humanity is acquainted. The history of the world is not wanting in instances of this magnificent disinterestedness. So far as man is concerned, it is the highest mark of esteem and honour which he can pay to a fellow-creature. This it was, which Christ, as a servant and a Son, rendered every moment of his life to God. And that which it is the loftiest ambition of mortals to obtain, was continually ascending to God the Father from Jesus Christ in the human form. No mere man ever presented it before or since. And therefore, amongst the multitude of human beings from the beginning to the end of time, Christ must have stood forth isolated and alone, a peculiar object of attraction, satisfaction, and delight, to the mind of God. The only tree bearing ripe fruit in this wide moral wilderness; the single oasis in the arid desert of our nature; was that which Christ's manhood presented to the all-searching Eye. Love to God was the secret spring that set in motion all the activities of Christ's affections. Glory to God in the highest was the powerful, all-pervading principle that actuated his words, and looks, and actions. To him to live was to honour God. In death to glorify him was his all. And now, then, the moment was come, in which the Father would return this glory to his Son. The hour of Christ's desertion by the Father, was the commencement of his uninterrupted and eternal glory, as the God-man, John xiii. 31. True, the astonishing miracles which he wrought, yielded him glory and honour, but it was not uninterrupted. Men blasphemed, and devils, though tormented, never yielded the mastery. But here on the cross, Christ, as the captain of our salvation, gained the victory over the invisible world. The Father left him alone that the spirits of darkness might feel his almighty power. It was as though he had said, "My Son has always rendered to me that honour which was due also to himself. In exerting my power, he has never magnified his own. Now let all created intelligences learn, that even while hanging on the cross in weakness, the God-Man is my almighty Son, and their almighty Lord." The moment then was come. Now was the hour and power of darkness. With combined and furious onset the spirits of evil assaulted the spirit of the Redeemer. For three hours the conflict lasted. Christ, the "Mighty God," vanquished them all, they retreated from the field of conflict in everlasting despair. From that hour to this, they remember his all-powerful energy, his invincible holiness. They tremble at his very name, and throughout eternity shall suffer the punishment of his wrath. Yet at the very moment of his victory, the Saviour seeks to glorify his Father. With a loud and powerful voice he calls upon his name. That name is most appropriate. "El" signifies strength, the mighty, or powerful one. And it is as if our Lord had said, "My strength, my strength, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me? Why am I left to fight this battle alone, and to gain a trophy of victory which I would rather lay at thy feet?" Though, then, it is not the first and principal object of this desertion, yet it is by no means an unimportant part of it, when we conclude that the reason why the Father was so far from helping Christ was, that the victory might be altogether his own.

Third. The third inquiry in this verse is, "Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring?" To which we are taught to reply, "That thou mayest learn obedience by the things which thou sufferest."

Such an answer no one would venture to make, were it not dictated in the volume of inspiration. It occurs in the epistle to the Hebrews, and refers to this very period in which Christ hung upon the cross. Death was the last lesson Christ was to learn. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 8. And it is with reference to this that the apostle says, "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," Heb. v. 8, 9. We must not understand this passage to declare, either that Christ learned obedience, as if he were ignorant of it before, or that he learned to be obedient, as if he had not been so till after suffering had taught him. It is written simply, "He learned obedience," that is, he learned what obedience is, and what all that obedience was to which he had voluntarily bound himself. Had Christ been satisfied with crucifixion unto blood; had he considered sin to be expiated when that was shed, he should have remained ignorant of the crucifixion unto death. In such a case, he must necessarily have been deficient in the grand and essential point for which he came into the world; nor could the apostle have added, that he was "made perfect." The perfection, (that is, the legal and official, not the moral perfection) of Christ, consisted in his accomplishing all that was written of him, and fulfilling all the types by which he had been foreshadowed. Death was the great event to which all Scripture testified, and which all the sacrifices under the law typified. Christ, therefore, could not be said to be "made perfect," or to have "learned obedience," till after he had tasted it. These two almost synonymous expressions involve the same difficulty, and are explained by the same interpretation. But, as being God, he was not capable of dying till he became man; so, being man, he was not qualified as a mediator, till he had passed through death.

The history of Christ may be divided into four parts: his birth, life, sufferings, and death. When it is said, that till his birth he was not acquainted experimentally with the wants and feelings of human nature, we do not, and cannot imply any ignorance in his Godhead. When it is added, that a calm quiet life could not have qualified him to be a sympathizing friend to the afflicted; and that till he had borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, he had not learned experimentally what our trials are, we do not imply that he was previously incapable of sympathy, defective in tenderness of feeling, or ignorant of what man requires. When we say that the sufferings of life, and agonies of crucifixion, were not sufficient to qualify him to be the author of eternal salvation, till they were consummated in death, we do not imply that there were any shortcomings in these sufferings, or any deficiency in these agonies. So, when Scripture says that he learned obedience by these sufferings, and was made perfect by that death, it is not implied, either that there was any ignorance of obedience, or any imperfection of nature, in our adorable Redeemer. All these form the four parts of one great whole; and as the latter was necessarily imperfect without the former—death without sufferings—sufferings without life—life without birth; so we say, the former were imperfect without the latter—birth without life—life without sufferings—and sufferings without death.

There is also a particular emphasis to be laid on the word obedience. The original teaches us to read it with an article prefixed. "He learned *the* obedience by the things which he suffered." That is, the appointed obedience, the necessary obedience, the obedience requisite to satisfy the whole law, the obedience necessary to compensate for man's disobedience; the obedience, namely, to do and to suffer whatever God the Father pleased, to which he had bound himself.

Christ upon the cross did therefore cry, or as the original strongly expresses it, "roar," as doth the wild animal under a wound; but God did not regard his words, so that he might learn and experience to the very uttermost what that obedience was which his Father required, which the law demanded, and which he himself had promised to render. As it is said of the childhood of Jesus, that "he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," Luke ii. 52; so may we say of his whole life from birth to death, that he was daily learning, and becoming practically and experimentally acquainted with the wants and feelings of our human nature, the sufferings of the flesh, the temptations of men and devils, and the holy determinations of God's will in reference to that atonement for sin which he was now accomplishing. Therefore the apostle declares that "we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but ONE who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," Heb. iv. 15.

Another, and fourth reason, may be added, in answer to these several interrogations, namely, "that thou mayest become a perfect pattern of suffering affliction and of patience, to all the universe, and especially to the members of thy church."

Christ's afflictions were altogether of a vicarious nature. He endured trials only in the room and for the benefit of others. On the theatre of this earth our Lord exhibited a lesson and a spectacle to the spirits of light and darkness which they shall never forget. To all the followers of his cross, he has left a most perfect example of the most perfect patience and submission, which they ought ever to imitate. It becomes them to do so. The bringing of many sons unto glory is not accomplished till the Captain of their salvation is made perfect through sufferings, Heb. ii. 10. "Therefore, let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps," 1 Peter ii. 21.

Reader, we have now been considering the most solemn fact, without exception, which the history of our world records. Earnestly pray that you may be suitably affected by it. Often meditate on what your Saviour must have suffered at that awful moment. It is not that he was pierced with nails; it is not that he was surrounded by enemies; it is not that he was dying a most ignominious death; it is not that he was deserted by his friends; but it is that he was forsaken by his Father, on which we wish you now to fix your attention. This is the one consideration that occupied all his dying thoughts. It is a truth which not only fills, but overwhelms the mind. That the Father should leave the Son; that the God of love should forsake him who cries, "My God, my God;" and that one, who is forsaken, should yet find it in his heart to address the Being that forsakes him with the language of affiance and adoption, is a twofold mystery. Yet it is a mystery which Scripture explains. God forsook the Son, because he was bearing the sins of the world, that he might gain a complete victory over the spirits of darkness, and that he might learn all the obedience, and become a perfect example by the things which he suffered. And the Son forsook not the Father, because his faith was perfect, his holiness unsullied, and his love stronger than death.

Here, then, in Christ your Surety, is set before you, as in a double mirror, God's method of dealing with you, and your duty in relation to God. The reasons why God forsook the Son, are the reasons, one or more of them, for which you have been, or are now, suffering, or may after this endure, the hidings of God's face. The faith, the righteousness, and the love, which Christ exhibited in this trial, are the same which you are to exercise in yours, and to seek to possess in still greater and greater degrees.

Sin is the first cause of desertion. Either some known and unrepented iniquity, or some secret and unexamined evil, is the worm that destroys the gourd of spiritual enjoyment. God has no pleasure in exclusion. He would that your peace should flow as a river. But first he must make the fountain pure. It is not God's heart, but yours, that hinders communion; therefore, examine diligently the state of your heart. Pray for the light of God's word and Spirit, to enable you to discern and detect its every flaw, and shortcoming, and sin. Remember that it is something *in* you, not merely *upon* you, that prevents the drawing near of the Lord to your soul. This is the difference between you and Christ under desertion. The sin was *upon* him, not *in* him. It was imputed, neither infused nor inborn. But in you it is both native and implanted. Seek, therefore, to have it rooted out. The light of God's countenance cannot return to you, till sin be confessed and deplored. If there be known sin, any besetment, any iniquity regarded in your heart, it is as impossible for light and darkness to mingle, as for God and your soul to have any peaceful communion. To preach comfort to you in such a state is most dangerous. To allow you to take any of the precious promises as a pillow for your unhumbled head, would be to lull you to a fatal repose. We trust this is not the case with you, Christian reader. We trust that you are anxious, with a great anxiety, to be wholly free from sin, to be outwardly and inwardly holy, to possess a pure and contrite heart, that beats with love to God, and with desire to be restored to his lost image.

Consider, then, that though there be no sin to which man can point, no sin which you do not weep over and condemn, yet there may be some secret root of bitterness springing up within you. Sin is a deceitful thing. Its first sproutings we often mistake for those of flowers. The eye alone of the husbandman instantly detects the weed. While therefore, you pray, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins," forget not also this entreaty, "Cleanse me from secret faults," Psa. xix. 12, 13. It may be that the bud of evil is already formed in your heart; and all unsuspecting and self-satisfied, you may be for going on as you are, or rather as you fancy yourself to be, till at last it will burst forth, and cover you with confusion by its pestilential odour. Or it may be, that the tare of the wicked one has just been dropped into your heart. It lies so still and dormant, that you cannot believe that it obtains a place in your bosom. Its first germ of life may be beginning to strike its feeble but insinuating roots. Shall God allow it to grow? Would you desire it to be spared till it become a tree and fall upon your own head? No, surely. And neither does the God who loves you. He will send blasts and storms; he will cause the heats of trial and distress to come; he will use the rod of affliction, and the pruning-knife of bereavement—"these things will he do unto you and not forsake you." He will wait for the result. If the growth of evil in you be checked, and good fruit begin to appear, well. If you be roused to inquire wherefore he contendeth with you; if you be brought to self-examination, confession, and reformation, well. But if not, then what remains after every other affliction has been tried, but that he hide his face from you? "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," Hos. iv. 17. God is compelled to do so. Your eternal welfare is at stake, and rather than you should perish God will reluctantly, yet certainly, have recourse to this his last and sorest punishment. Remember, you have yourself rendered this measure imperative. It is the last act to which your heavenly Father desires to have recourse, Deut. xxxi. 17, 18; xxxii. 20. You must be exercised by it for your soul's rescue and salvation. Christ was exercised by it for our sakes, and to prove that he was perfect. Every other trial had been laid on Jesus, and when his dying hour arrived, that neither Satan, nor our distrustful hearts, should be able to say that he was not tempted in all points like as we are, even this was brought upon him.

The trial, though severe, is a mercy and a blessing to you, and on God's part it is an act of kindness. Rather than die, you would submit to the excision of one or more of the members of your body. Rather than perish, be willing to suffer any trial, if so be that you may thereby be kept from the slavery of sin, the lusts of the flesh, and the slumber of spiritual sloth.

As we know not from what and how many unseen dangers the intervening providence of God has delivered us in our progress through life, so we cannot understand from how many sins and crimes the trials we have experienced may have kept us back. The light of eternity will make strange revelations, and show all things plain. What we had deemed our greatest evils, shall then appear to have been our richest blessings; and what we now prize with avaricious fondness, we may then see would have proved our destruction, had it not been snatched away. Regard, then, the hiding of God's face as intended to bring you to serious and impartial self-examination; to make you watchful, prayerful, humble, and diligent; to teach you to hold fast your first love; to strengthen the good things that remain in your heart, and which, perhaps, may be ready to die, Rev. ii. 4; iii. 2; and to lead you to cut off and mortify the evil things that are ready to live; and to bring you with ingenuous mind to your Father, and childlike say, "That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more," Job xxxiv. 32.

Let the desponding and deserted Christian remember, however, for his comfort, that there are two other reasons on account of which the Lord in wisdom and in love may now be hiding his face from him. Those already mentioned are for the detecting, punishing, and removing of evil; these to which we would now call your attention are for the strengthening, improving, and increasing of your graces; to make you conquerors over your spiritual enemy, and to teach you all obedience by the things which you suffer. Remember, there may be no special sin which brings this trial upon you. Therefore let not your conscience be burdened, where, perhaps, there may be no just cause. The disciples in their ignorance inquired, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? But Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him," John ix. 2, 3. This may be thy case, O Christian. Thou mayest now be walking in darkness, that God may be glorified in thee. As members of Christ's church, we are to show unto principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. We are to glorify God even in the fires. Angels are to learn in us what patience means, what resignation, and submission. Even the highest archangel who basks in the sunshine of eternal glory is to look down upon a poor despised Christian, and learn what it is to live by faith and not by sense; to hope against hope; to rejoice in tribulation; to follow hard after God even when he turns away; and to be actuated at one and the same moment by two wills, the one conscious of its own desire, yet checking itself by another, even the will of God, turning whithersoever it leads and crying, "Not my will, but thine be done." These are lessons which cannot be learned in heaven. Angels are fain to look down upon our earth to read them. And where but in the church of Christ can they be found? Where but in thy heart, O Christian, and in thy brethren that are in the "midst of this naughty world?" The various crosses and losses of time are common, every day lessons. The most intensely interesting, the highest lesson, which these bright intelligences can obtain, is from a Christian under desertion. That lesson, as indeed every other, was perfectly taught by our great Master. Yet even our imperfect exhibitions of it, impart wisdom as well as astonishment, to these superior beings. They delight to see a Christian bearing with patience and resignation the loss of fortune, the removal of friends, the decays of strength, the other trials and sufferings of life. But when an angel beholds a Christian under the hidings of his Maker's countenance, his whole attention is riveted. He may indeed exclaim, "How will this creature act?" And well may he think with himself, "What should I do if that blessed countenance were turned away from me? What should I become? should I not be driven to despair?" When, then, this angel looks upon the deserted Christian, and beholds him mute and silent, not uttering one murmuring word; when next he perceives that tears begin to flow;—sees him fall upon his bended knees in the retirement of his closet, and hears him say, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit," Psa. l.; when he beholds this, he must exceedingly bless and praise the Lord, who hath given such grace to men. And further, when he observes, that instead of becoming fretful or sullen, instead of running on in a reckless course, and becoming as forgetful of God, as God appears to have become of him, the Christian acknowledges the justice of God's treatment, often pleads and intercedes for reconciliation, and becomes more and more scrupulous in all his thoughts, and words, and works; leaves nothing undone by which he can serve and please God, and pants and desires with an increasing earnestness of heart after the light of his countenance; that angel, from the contemplation of this scene, will surely turn towards the throne of glory, prostrate himself in adoring admiration, and exclaim, "Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints."

But there is yet another high purpose to subserve. The Christian under desertion must not only furnish a song of praise to the angels of light, but also a lesson of instruction and humiliation to the angels of darkness. These "adversaries" are always insinuating some foul and lying charge, both against the Lord and against his people. Therefore, in his matchless wisdom, Jehovah sometimes takes the "wise in their own craftiness," Job v. 13, and permits them to carry out their insinuations to their own confusion. Witness the case of Job. The Lord delivered him into the enemy's hand, that the lie might be detected by all the "sons of God" in whose presence it was uttered. Trial and trouble, privation and loss, one upon another, were brought in rapid succession against that chosen servant. Satan desired to have him. But the great Advocate prayed for him, that his faith might not fail. And though all the means and instruments of Satanic malice were brought to bear upon that lonely man, yet could he not be driven to curse the Lord. The bitterest blast only caused his faith to burn brighter out of the ashes of his earthly hopes; and all the spiritual spectators of that mortal combat beheld Satan's scowl of dismay, and the gleam of triumph in Job's sunken eye when he exclaimed, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15.

It may be so with you, O Christian! Take courage from the consideration. Be faithful unto death. Never give up your claim, through Christ, on a covenant God. To such as you the prophet speaks, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God," Isa. l. 10.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe," Prov. xviii. 10. Call upon that name; appropriate it to yourself; do so once and again; say, yea, cry like Jesus even in the deepest gloom, "My God, *my* God." Beware of distrust; beware of unbelief; it leads to despondency, and despondency to despair. Always look upwards. Think of your Master on the cross. He was forsaken; he had no one to plead on his behalf; he felt the bitterness of desertion infinitely beyond what you experience, for he fully knew the blessedness of near and intimate union and communion with God. Stay yourself, then, on him, and through him, on God, as your Lord and your Father. Cry earnestly, "Restore unto me thy free Spirit." The Comforter will come. He alone can impart life, and light, and peace. And though he tarry, wait for him, wait in prayer, and still hang upon him in earnest longing expectation.

THE COMPLAINT.

VERSE 2.—*O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*

HAVING given utterance to his anguish with a loud voice—having called upon God in the first part of the verse which we have just considered, we suppose it highly probable that the remainder of that verse, and also of the whole Psalm, was inwardly ejaculated by our blessed Lord while hanging on the cross. That great cry attracted the attention of men, but now these inward breathings of supplication are intended for the ear of God.

What strong faith is here exhibited! Deserted and forsaken as Jesus was—left alone in the midst of his enemies—thrilling in every limb, with agony the most intense,—and surrounded by an oppressive and appalling darkness, he could yet cry, "My God, my God," and still employs, in this verse, the same term of relationship and affiance. It is as if he would say, "However much I may be tried, I will not forego my claim. I will acknowledge no other Lord. Thou hast all right and all authority over me. Thou art my God, and whether it please thee to regard or to disregard my cry, I will not believe that I no longer belong to thee, or that I shall always be cast off. O my God, suffer me to speak; I must unburden my breaking heart; I want none but thee; I will complain to none against thee—to thyself alone will I tell my griefs.—'I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.'"

How like the expostulation of a human child with an earthly parent! It proceeds on the ground of relationship—"I am thine; I cry day and night, yet am not heard. Thou art my God, yet nothing is done to silence me. In the day-time of my life, I cried, in this night season of my death I entreat. In the garden of Gethsemane I occupied the night with prayers; with continual ejaculations have I passed through this eventful morning. O my God, thou hast not yet heard me, therefore am I not yet silent; I cannot cease till thou answerest." Here Christ urges his suit in a manner which none but filial hearts adopt. The child knows that the parent yearns over him. His importunity is strengthened by confidence in his love. He keeps not silence; he gives him no rest, because he confides in his power and willingness to grant the desired relief. This is natural; it is the argument of the heart—an appeal to the inward yearnings of our nature. It is also scriptural, and is thus stated, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13.

Our Lord seems to refer to Gethsemane, "I cry in the night season." Many a night had he spent with God in prayer, but never one like that. Here on the cross, he identifies the subject of his petition with that which he thrice presented there in his agony. He complains to God that he is not yet silenced, and that what he there asked has not yet been granted. If this view be correct, it enables us to understand the cause of that great agony, and explains the bitterness of that mysterious cup. We know what the subject matter of his prayer is on the cross, and we hence learn on what his holy human will was fixed in his threefold prayer. It was neither relief from fear of death, nor deliverance from the expected cross; it was not mitigation of pain—nor escape from his persecutors—nor safety from Satan's assults, for which he prayed—all these were as nothing to him. To be under such oppressive sorrow because of any one or more, or all of these causes, were unworthy the Captain of our salvation, unlike him who said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." But here is a noble and worthy reason—here is a matter in every sense becoming the "will" of him who never felt, or thought, or spake but in perfect harmony with the "will" of his Father. Here is a prayer in which even Christ may possess, as assuredly he did, *two wills*, and yet be free from sin. That prayer is, that he may enjoy the light of his Father's countenance. What language can be conceived more appropriate in the mouth of a son? What prayer more agreeable to the ear of the Father? This was the prayer which Jesus presented in the garden and on the cross. In the one he deprecated a trial to which he was looking forward; in the other he prays under its pressure when already come. We all know how dreadful is the apprehension of evil. It is magnified by distance. We have time to think of its worst aggravations, and all the others appear larger by being dimly discerned. When, too, the trial is of a strange and unexperienced nature; of a kind which we have never yet passed through; its strangeness invests it with exciting and mysteriously fascinating power over us, which engages the whole mind, and often overwhelms it. Such, in some measure, we apprehend, was that sensation which made our blessed Saviour "exceeding sorrowful even unto death," when in the garden of Gethsemane; and which, with the excruciating reality and intensity of its presence, made him forget even death itself when he was hanging on the cross. It is something, which, before it came, Christ can liken to nothing but the last and greatest evil which humanity contemplates. No greater comparison, as to this world, can be employed. But when it is come, it proves, like death, to be enough of itself, and swallows up every other consideration. Therefore, throughout this psalm, and in all his words on the cross recorded in the Gospels, there is not the slightest allusion to, or the remotest intimation of desire for, deliverance from death. Oh no: it was something infinitely beyond mortal death which our Immanuel dreaded, against which he importunately prayed, and for the obtaining of which he would never rest. Exclusion, as our Surety, from a sense of his Father's presence, was the last and bitterest affliction which Christ was called to endure; and it was the one only trial which his holy filial heart must wish, and rightly wish, to be shortened—to be removed. To be passively contented in such a condition, is as sinful as it is fatal. It proves that we care not for Him from whom we are excluded; that we are indifferent whether he be pleased or angry with us. To the Father who orders the infliction, such an exhibition must be even more wounding and hateful than the original offence. That parent can answer who has been tried by a wilful and rebellious son. What cut deepest into thy wounded heart? Was it not this, that when ordered to leave thy house and see thy face no more, he was still unmelted, and seemed as well satisfied with banishment, as if he were abiding under a father's blessing? That revolting picture which a prodigal thus presents, is the very reverse of what Jesus exhibited. His heart burned with love to his Father; his whole soul was occupied with an intense desire to please him, to be with him, to be near him. Christ was, to the utmost point of perfection, what a son, what every son ought to be. His happiness lay where his duty lay, his desires and delights were all centred in obedience. He had no separate interests, no selfish considerations, no personal gratifications, to further and attend to. His will was entirely one with the will of his Father; and that single passage in his history which discloses the identity, by the working, of his own separate and personal will, divulges, not only its holiness by the object on which it fixed, but also its full acquiesence and harmony therein with the Father's will.

The vast importance of this subject demands the fullest consideration. It opens a path to the removal of all, or most of, those difficulties which encompass the mysterious scene in the garden. It presents the Saviour in an attitude which must have exceedingly endeared him to his Father, at the very moment when he was pleading for the removal of that cup, which the Father had determined should not be altogether withdrawn. What was that cup? It was the last, the bitterest which the law had sentenced him to drink. Its dreadful ingredient was exclusion from the Divine presence. It was not put into his hand till he had hung some considerable time on the cross. The sun hid itself in darkness whilst this cup was administered. If such a darkness and horror spread itself over the whole land at the solemn and awful period, no wonder that an exceeding and overwhelming sorrow came upon the soul of Jesus, when he contemplated it in the garden, on the night previous to its execution. As the last sentence of the law, there was every reason for him to suppose that he was to die under it. Justice seemed to require this. As the Surety of sinners, he must undergo their sentence. The ignominy of the cross, the pains of body, the assaults of devils, and the curse of the law, are to be continued till death ensue. Is the remaining part of the sentence—even exclusion from the Divine presence—to be similarly executed? No reason appears why it should not. Awful thought! Die under the hidings of my Father's face? O dreadful sentence. The more he thought of it when he retired into the shades of Gethsemane, the more horrifying it appeared. No wonder, then, that it is recorded, "He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy," Mark xiv. 33. He began to think of it with renewed attention, and consequently to feel it with greater acuteness. His sensations correspond with the nature of their cause. That cause is of a most strange and inexperienced kind, therefore he is "sore amazed." It is also dreadful, therefore "He began to be very sorrowful." It is awfully oppressive, therefore is he "very heavy." Must I be separated from my Father? Am I to die without the light of his presence? Is this the irrevocable sentence? I cannot bear the thought. "O my Father! if it be possible: Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee: take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt," (compare Matt. xxvi. 39, with Mark xiv. 36.) The "sore amazement" of his spirit is exhibited in his actions. He rose from his knees--he went to the disciples—he returned a second time to pray. Again he rose—again he came to the disciples—a third time he returned to pray. The amazement increased, "He fell upon his face." His "sorrow" became "exceeding;" "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." The oppression had become so great —the mental pressure so "very heavy," that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood." But what is the subject of this last, this agonizing prayer? Is it not the same with the first? Does he not use the same words? Does he not deprecate the same cup? Yet he never names it. So sensitively does he recoil from it; so abhorrent is it to his nature, that he seems as if he cannot bear to mention it. Never till the darkness actually enveloped him on the cross, could its dreadful name be wrung forth in words; then he gave utterance to it.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is a cry which burst from the inmost heart of the Saviour, and divulged the secret that oppressed it. What else was worthy to affect that sacred heart to such a degree? What else became the holy will of a Son, either while differing from, or acquiescing in, a Father's will? On what other subject could Christ have a will of his own, which should yet gain the approbation of him before whom he stood? That Christ set his mind on an object, and prayed for it with threefold earnestness, yet never obtained it, is no pleasing thought to the Christian mind. That he desired that for which he ought not to have asked, is not for a moment to be believed. We conclude, then, that our Saviour "in the night season" in Gethsemane, entreated that he might not die under the hiding of his Father's countenance; but if it were the Father's will that he should depart out of this world under it, his love and obedience were so great, that even in this he would submit; that God, acting towards Christ as a Judge, did not then answer his petition, but was so well pleased as a Father, with his earnest desire to be admitted to his presence, that he sent an angel to strengthen him: and that here on the cross, the Saviour renews this supplication, and continues in this psalm to pray with the most determined importunity, till he succeed, and is able to expire in light, and peace, and triumph.

Having now considered the subject of that prayer, let us consider the argument—it is based on OMNIPOTENCE. "Abba, Father, if it be possible; all things are possible with thee." This is an ultimate point. Creature extremity can never reach beyond the help of Omnipotence. But how shall we bring it to our aid? The answer is ready, "By trusting to it." Therefore, the Scripture declares, "all things are possible to him that believeth," Mark ix. 23; and again, "What things soever ye ask in prayer, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them," Mark xi. 24. It must be previously supposed that no creature will presume to ask any thing contrary to the holy character and revealed will of God. And then, when the object is such as the Scriptures warrant, there is not only clear ground for the strongest confidence, but also a consequent duty to exercise faith, and a sin in not believing. As, then, the Saviour desired re-admission to the light of God's countenance, the desire was holy, just, and good. His earnestness and importunity regarding it, must consequently be the same. Whether, therefore, we behold him three several times pleading for his own will, or as often again submitting to the Father's will, we perceive that he is equally holy, just, and good in both: and we know not which to admire most highly, his perseverance in seeking this blessing, which he acknowledges it may not be the Father's will to give, or his filial submission to that will, even should it continue to deny his request! How did Christ, as a man, setting example to his church, accomplish this? First, he knew that his petition was right in itself. Secondly, he knew that, being right, God certainly approved of it. Thirdly, he knew that however apparently impossible, nothing was or could be impossible with God. Fourthly, he knew that prayer is God's own appointed means for the bestowment of blessings. Fifthly, he therefore employs this means to make known his will to his Father, and uses the argument of his omnipotence, to show that there is no difficulty in the way, but that which lies in the Father's will. Sixthly, to that will, whatever it may be, he then submits. He holds it too sacred to be intruded on—he stops at this point—he rises from prayer rather than proceed further—he returns to pray a second time—uses however only the same means, presents the same argument, reaches the same point, and again pauses in submission—retires a second time, but soon returns; yet it is only to do as he had done before, and though with increased vehemence and energy, yet still he stops at the same point; and having laid his petition at the threshold of the presence chamber of the Divine will, leaves it there, and submissively retires.

Such is the manner in which Christ acts in prayer. He carries all desires, distresses, enemies, and impossibilities, nay, also omnipotence itself, before him, and along with him, to the throne of grace. He yields to nothing that opposes his progress towards it. Even the might and power of God, which naturally terrify and keep the soul at a distance, faith interprets in its own favour, and presses forward with greater alacrity. To the Supreme Will alone does it submit. What it does not yield to Almighty Power, it concedes at once, with fullest resignation, to the Almighty Will. Never does it venture further. It seeks not to interfere with the Divine volition; it presumes not to inquire what reasons influence, what motives actuate. Concluding that all the determinations of the Most High are, and must be, in and of themselves, immutably and eternally right, it rests in calm submission with the disappointment of its fondest wishes, the blasting of its fairest hopes, and destruction of all its present happiness, believing that the Will which orders it is, and must be, right.

Such is the blessed position of our resigned submissive Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross on Calvary. But yet, in his experience, there is another point, even deeper, and more blessed, than this. It is, that Christ rested upon the will of God, not only as to whatever it might be, but also, as knowing what it could *not* be, in reference to his petition. He knew that God's will was *not* that he should be excluded for ever from the Divine presence. He therefore willingly submitted to endure the darkness of exclusion, so long as his Father pleased, even to die under it, if he had so determined; accounting the most protracted period as but a moment, compared with the eternity of union and communion in light and bliss, from which he knew it could not be the will of God to sentence him to everlasting banishment. This enables the heart to add to submission patience, and to patience satisfaction, and to satisfaction approbation. Christ did not only submit to the will of God; he approved of it as wise and good. To be for hours or days, in life or death, separated from the presence of his Father, he could and would patiently endure, if such were his holy will for the salvation of men; but he knew that his Father's heart was as much opposed as his own to eternal separation; therefore, with a satisfied and approving heart, he could rise from that prayer of blood, and, calm and strengthened in spirit, could deliver himself quietly into the hands of the traitor and his band, not yet knowing, by direct communication, what the Father's will was in reference to his petition, but well knowing what it was not.

Such appears to have been the state of mind in which the Saviour left Gethsemane. The same holy calm of soul was exhibited in all his words and actions before his judges. On Mount Calvary, too, and on the way thither, how beautifully does this self-possession characterize the Redeemer! Cheering his disconsolate followers, we hear him say, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children," Luke xxiii. 28. When arrived at the place of execution, the first words he utters is a prayer for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. Hanging on the cross, his filial heart forgets its own woes to provide for a mother's comfort, "Woman, behold thy son," and to a disciple, "Behold thy mother," John **xix.** 26, 27. Unmoved to reply by all the taunts and insinuations that were heaped upon him, no sooner does he hear the voice of the suppliant thief, than he administers consolation to his penitent heart, and says, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," Luke xxiii. 43. But a long interval occurs before he speaks again—an awful interval it was of darkness and desertion. From midday till about three o'clock the gloom enveloped the land. For three hours Christ was speechless. During all this time he was drinking of that cup of desertion, against which he had prayed in the garden. Its bitterness was even greater than he had feared. So dreadful was this new sensation, that he could no longer be silent under it: and the next utterance which the evangelists record, is the doleful cry which this Psalm supplies, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is the only expression of sorrow which our Saviour uttered on the cross. The three remaining sentences are severally dictated by a sense of duty, a consciousness of victory, and a filial confidence in his Father's care over his departing spirit. How thankful, then, ought we to be that the same psalm which supplied an outlet to the Saviour's anguish, affords us a clue to the state of his mind, gives us an insight into the progress of his thoughts from desertion to deliverance, and puts us in possession of his arguments in prayer, and of his grateful acclamations of praise!

This verse is a continuation of that cry. It carries on the petition, gives it fresh force, by presenting it in a new form, and urges the suit with greater liberty and boldness, by complaining that it is not yet regarded, "O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." In the margin it is thus translated, "and there is no silence to me." The original literally signifies, "There is nothing done to cause me to be silent." It thus expresses a twofold sentiment, that God had not granted his prayers, or done any thing for his relief, and that he will not cease to pray till he has obtained an answer.

Remember this blessed example, this instructive lesson, Christian reader. Imitate the pattern which the psalmist here sets before you, and which your Saviour has left for your guidance. Learn, like Jacob of old, to say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Whatever trials beset you, though walking in darkness and having no light, complain to God, but never of him. Pour out your whole heart before him, Jehovah is a refuge for you. He who supplicated for himself on the cross, is now interceding on your behalf at the throne. Faint not. Bring forth your strong reasons. Be not dismayed. He will not plead against you with his great power—no; but He will put strength in you, Job xxiii. 6. It may be the night season of your experience. The gloom of midnight may surround you. Remember Christ under the darkness, and take courage. His sorrows were deeper than thine; he opened them all to his Father—he would take no denial. So do thou; confess fully, unreservedly; enumerate each failing and transgression; deplore your condition; beg for pardon, peace, and purity again; add tears to sighs and words to groans; fear nothing but silence, and you shall soon have no silence to fear.

Painful and most distressing, however, is the experience of apparently disregarded prayer. How often has God called on us, and *we* have turned a silent ear! This experience, therefore, enables us to sympathize with Him who says, "I have stretched forth my hands all day long unto a disobedient and gainsaying people," Rom. x. 21; and with Him who wept over Jerusalem and said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii. 37. The deep purposes of our Father in heaven, by these sad experiences of his children, are to bring them by a way which they know not, to be of one mind with himself. The more we are tried and exercised, the better are we prepared for a high seat in glory. Remember therefore, deserted Christian, that even though no cause be apparent to you, God has a high and heavenly design in you and for you, which nothing but your present experience can accomplish. Wait but for a few days, and the glass through which you now see darkly shall fall from your hands, and in the bright mirror of eternity you shall see all things plainly, and know even as you are known. You know the hand that afflicts, but you are ignorant of some of the reasons that direct. Press not to know them all; submit to the will of your Father, whatever it may be; but O live not in ignorance of his will, so far as it is revealed. In Jesus such a declaration has been given of that will, as may suffice to cheer the most disconsolate heart. The angels sang it at his birth, "GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN." That one term is enough, "good will!" What more can we desire? The good will of our Creator towards us, is enough to put to flight all doubts and fears of heart, all suggestions and surmises of darkness. Thus, like our blessed Saviour, we can rest even on the unknown will of Jehovah, and believe that it is "good." But if, through the power of temptation, we may not be able to gain stability for our tempest-tossed thoughts, on this general declaration, there is further revealed for our encouragement this positive assurance, "this is the will of God, even your sanctification," 1 Thess. iv. 3. Lean, then, on this truth, that even your present darkness and desertion of spirit, is accomplishing the gracious will and purpose of the Lord in the purifying of your nature. Is it not a strong support to patience and submission, to know that even the most painful of all trials is working out for you and in you, the most blessed of all ends? Do you feel the temptations of sin—are you harassed by the suggestions of Satan—have you no light to cheer, no comforting promise to support you—no answer to your many earnest prayers for deliverance? Stay your mind on this blessed truth, that God cannot, and does not, will, that sin and defilement should pollute his creatures. It is not the will of God that any one should be unholy. Here, then, is an everlasting basis. It cannot fail. God is unchangeable. He never will choose, or appoint, or approve, any thing connected with sin. Behold, then, on what an indestructible foundation you may build your hopes, when you sigh and cry for freedom from every plague of the heart. Your prayer is acceptable to the Lord God of Sabaoth. He will assuredly answer it; but in his own time, and in his own way. That *time* you will one day acknowledge to have been right and seasonable—not a moment sooner, nor a moment later, than it ought to have been. That *way* you will recognise to have been the best and safest by which *you*, with your peculiar temperament, and in your particular circumstances of life, could have been conducted from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven.*

But should you, in a long-continued storm of spiritual trouble, require another anchor to prevent your being driven on the rocks of despair, the Scriptures graciously provide you with this declaration, "The Lord is not willing that any should perish," 2 Pet. iii. 9. This enables the soul to outride the fiercest tempest. We know not through what, and how many, trials we must be brought, in order to the accomplishment of that "will" which desires our "sanctification;" and at the thought of this we may be often cast down; but, whatever trials result from the "sanctifying will," that other "will" which desires NOT that we should "perish," affords us support and consolation; so that, though cast down, we know that we shall not be destroyed; though perplexed, we know that we need not fall into despair. Driven, then, from one position to another—falling deeper and deeper into doubts and despondences, and utter hopelessness, here is a point beyond which the Christian cannot fall—cannot be driven. Even on the very verge of despair, he might argue thus, "Scripture obliges me to believe that God is not willing that any should perish; I must therefore conclude, that he is not willing that I should perish. Here I will take my stand. I will not give way to despair." No sooner does the Christian thus rest on this scriptural ground, than the light of hope begins to rekindle within his breast. It increases: it imparts warmth and life to his benumbed heart. Vital action is exhibited in cries, and prayers, and supplications. He draws nearer and nearer to God as a father and a friend. He trusts him more fully; he loves him more ardently; he serves him more diligently. The weight that crushed him is removed. He runs with alacrity in the path of obedience. Ere long he enters where no more weight can fall, no more pressure be felt; but "the far more exceeding, even the eternal weight of glory," and the pressure of love and gratitude and adoration, for ever and ever.

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* Read the hymn which begins, "I asked the Lord that I might grow."—*Olney Collection.*

THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

VERSE 3.—*But thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

WHEN the Saviour of the world hung upon the cross, the whole universe of intelligent beings appeared to be against him. The very elements seemed to have joined his enemies. The friendly light of day suddenly became like the darkness of night. Disciples, too, had fled, and left him alone. Jews and Gentiles were assembled in one hostile band. Spirits of evil, headed by the prince of darkness, were marshalled against him. The angels of light came not to his help. Sent forth, as they were, to be ministering spirits to others, they were not so then to him. The law of God sounded forth its voice against him, and enveloped Calvary with the terrors of Mount Sinai, by its awful declaration, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And, above all, his own God and Father had forsaken him. No light, no gracious communings, no smile of love, came now from their wonted source. This was the severest trial of all. Were God but to cast one look of approbation upon him, its blessedness would nullify the curse of the law, and the desertion of friends; its sanction would give wing to angels, strike devils with dismay, and discomfit all his persecutors. But though that approbation filled the bosom of the Most High, every exhibition of it was restrained. No manifestation of love was vouchsafed. All was darkness; all was silence. Christ prayed, but there was no answer. Christ cried, but there was no reply. The Son earnestly entreated the Father, but was not regarded. Night and day he offered up his fervent petitions, but they brought no return, save their own cold echo, to his heart. What then does he now think of God? Does he still trust in the Hearer of prayer, even though he hear him not? This is the momentous question. In this all the anxieties of devils are centred; on this hinges the salvation of men. To decide this great question, Christ is brought to this narrow strait. To demonstrate to the glory of God, and the confusion of the "father of lies," that a human soul can trust in the Lord even when he appears to frown, Christ placed himself in his present unparalleled position. Nay, to prove that a human soul can not only trust for future deliverance, but even justify God in regard to present inflictions, and acknowledge his righteousness in the severest of trials, Christ here adds, "But thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel;" or, as it is rendered in the Prayer-book version, "But thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel." Here is the triumph of faith. The Saviour stood like a rock in the wide ocean of temptation. High as the billows rose, so did his faith, like the coral rock, wax greater and stronger, till it became an island of salvation to our shipwrecked souls. "Thou art holy." It is as if he had said, "It matters not what I endure. Storms may howl upon me; men despise; devils tempt; circumstances overpower; and God himself forsake me; still God is holy, there is no unrighteousness in him."

The Saviour painfully experienced on the cross that the dealings of Providence were altered towards him, but he never conceived that the paternal heart was changed. He felt that an awful burden lay upon him. He was conscious that the "thick cloud" of the world's transgressions had come between him and God, so that his prayer had not yet passed through, Lam. iii. 44. His soul was overwhelmed with horror at the strange sensation of being unable to discern a Father's face, or feel his all-pervading presence. A mere man in such a situation would have murmured, would have ceased to pray to one who hid his face. But not so the "God of patience," Rom. xv. 5. He neither broke forth with repinings, nor sunk back into sullen silence. The contradictions of sinners, the insinuations of Satan, the piercings of the flesh, the anguish of desertion, extorted from the immaculate Redeemer, no other than this most blessed testimony regarding his Father, "But thou art holy."

This is the highest testimony which human thought, or language, can render. "Holy" is an unrivalled, unexampled, term. No equivalent word can be substituted. It signifies not merely a righteousness which law has not condemned, and a purity which sin has never sullied; but a righteousness which law *cannot* condemn, and a purity which sin *cannot* defile. God is holy. This expresses the highest idea we can form of ABSOLUTE PERFECTION. It includes both a negative and positive sense. It denotes the absence of whatever is weak, selfish, sinful, and polluted; and the presence of essential purity, goodness, love, and every excellency. God is holy. "He CANNOT be tempted with sin; NEITHER tempteth he any man," James i. 13. This sets before us a two-fold view of the Divine holiness. First, as it refers to God himself; and, Secondly, to ourselves. The nature of God is such that it is utterly impossible he can be tempted by Satan, or man, to form an uncharitable judgment, utter a rash sentence, or do an unkind or unjust act towards any of his creatures. Sin CANNOT present itself in any form so as to gain his approbation or consent. He is immaculate in holiness. Like the pure light of heaven, he can no more be affected by the sins of the world, than can the solar orb by the vapours of our earth.

Like the sun too, in its own light, GOD IS GLORIOUS IN HIS OWN HOLINESS, Exod. xv. 11.

Secondly, in reference to us, it is said, "Neither tempteth he any man." God CANNOT be tempted, NEITHER CAN he tempt. This latter assertion refers not to the power of God, as if he were incapable; but to his nature, whereby he is unwilling; and it is stated in this positive form in reference to all his outgoings towards man, HE DOTH NOT TEMPT. The nature of God is such that he never did, never will, never can, do any thing to induce man or angel to deviate in the slightest degree from moral rectitude. Neither storm nor sunshine, prosperity nor adversity, are sent by God on his creatures, to lead them into sin. He CANNOT do so, any more than the sun can send forth rays of darkness.

The Divine nature is holy. Holiness in God is essential and underived. It is not merely one of the attributes of the Godhead. It is the foundation and perfection of them all. Therefore, says an old divine, "Holiness is the beauty of all God's attributes; without which his wisdom would be subtilty, his justice cruelty, his sovereignty tyranny, his mercy foolish pity."

The holiness of God, therefore, is the perfection of his perfections, the excellency of his excellences, and the glory of all his attributes. God the Father is holy; God the Son is holy; God the Spirit is holy. The anthem therefore of eternity which angels sing is, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." They behold continual displays of the wisdom, power, justice, truth, and goodness of Jehovah; these attract their admiration and excite their praises. But when they look to him who "sitteth upon the throne of his holiness," Psa. xlvii. 8, they are dazzled by the glistening brightness of ETERNAL PURITY; and instantly conscious how in his sight the heavens are not clean, Job xv. 15, and themselves chargeable with folly, Job iv. 18, the seraphims cover their faces, and their feet, as they fly in adoration around it; and not venturing directly to address the High and Holy one that inhabiteth eternity, they cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 2, 3.

If such be the high and heavenly glory of the Godhead, ought it not also to be our distinguishing theme of praise on earth? The gods of the nations were proverbially patterns of impurity, yet they worshipped them. Herein consisted the glory of the Hebrew nation, that they alone venerated the pure and holy Jehovah. His name is The Worship of Israel. He inhabited the praises of the chosen people. The remembrance of his name was kept alive by their tabernacle and temple. He declared of them, "This is my rest; here will I dwell." He exhibited himself among them by a dark cloud and a shining glory; and he gave them his blessing from off the mercy-seat. Their polity is done away, but the Holy One is still worshipped by the Israel of God. That name is applied in Scripture to all who partake of Jacob's spirit, who prevail in prayer with God; "for they are not all Israel who are of Israel," Rom. ix. 6. Every true Israelite, then, every one who through prayer has obtained this new name, is sure to offer up praises and thanksgivings. These are acceptable to the Most High, they ascend before him as clouds of incense. They encompass his throne. He dwells in the midst of them. The false gods possessed the praises of the heathen, and their polluted names occupied their songs. But the holy Jehovah exclusively possessed the prayers of the Hebrews. His name alone is celebrated in the hymns of the spiritual worshipper, the Israelite indeed. Wander wide over the earth, enter wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, listen to the prayers and praises of those who worship Jehovah "in spirit and in truth," and none other but the name of the one living and true God shall be heard praised for its holiness, extolled alone as excellent. How admirably the praises of the church below accord with those of the church, and the angelic hosts, above! The highest note we raise on earth harmonizes with the three-fold chord which is struck in heaven. We sing in feeble, broken strains, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works," Psa. cxlv. 17. They fill eternity with their swelling symphony, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 3.

Meditate frequently on the holiness of God. This will beget holy desires in your soul, which, by the Spirit of grace, will ripen into the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God, Phil. i. 11. Remember that it is only by the help of the Lord the Spirit, that your mind can reach this transcendent theme. He is eminently called the Holy Spirit; not because he is more holy than the other persons in the sacred Trinity, but because he is known to us as the revealer, the communicator, and the preserver of holiness. It is a high and God-like desire to be holy. The most debased of men often wish to attain heaven, because they think they shall be happy. But to pant after an unsullied purity of nature, and to disregard safety of condition as nothing in comparison with restoration to holiness, is not a mortal man's suggestion, but an inspired thought which proceeds from the "Spirit of holiness." Heaven is not a mere place of safety; it is a paradise of purity. The happiness of heaven is based on the holiness of its inhabitants. God is holy, and his angels holy; the Redeemer is holy, and his people holy: there are none in heaven beside. That word which sinners refuse to hear on earth, "Be ye holy; for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 16, is a word which gladdens heaven, and imparts fresh feelings of unity to the whole family of glory. Therefore seek after the attainment of holiness as the first point of earthly duty, the highest of heavenly privilege. The mind of the infinite God is occupied by this desire; therefore he sends mercies to gain our affections. He delivers us from the hands of our enemies, that we may serve him in holiness all the days of our life, Luke i. 74, 75. Therefore also he administers the rod of correction, that we may become "partakers of his holiness," Heb. xii. 10. Mark that scripture. Let it be engraved on the heart of every afflicted Christian. Here is unfolded the great secret which actuates the Most High in the severest of his afflictions. Fathers of our flesh corrected us after their own pleasure. The infliction, perhaps, was more frequently proportioned to the amount of their own anger, than to the magnitude of the offence. The destruction of some trifle which they valued might draw down the severest correction; while, perhaps, some flagrant violation of the holy law of God was overlooked or feebly reproved. Of none, but the heavenly Parent, can it be said that his inflictions were invariably intended for our profit. In him there can be no caprice of feeling, no error in judgment, no mistake as to the object, the cause, or the motive of the correction. The *objects* of his fatherly chastisements are his own sons and daughters, whom he is preparing for glory. The *causes* are their omissions of duty, their short-comings in love, their wilful transgressions, and their dulness in spiritual learning. The *motive* is their true and eternal benefit. The Scripture here calls it their "*profit.*" What heart can sufficiently exult at eternal gain? What power of calculation can estimate its amount? This "*profit*" is that we might be "PARTAKERS OF HIS HOLINESS." Not the holiness of angels, but that of God himself. Afflictions, therefore, are designed to accomplish the same end with "the exceeding great and precious promises." What St. Paul declares to be the object of the former, is identical with what St. Peter tells us is the intention of the latter, "that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4.

Who will then repine? Who will not rejoice at the amazing disclosure of this God-like purpose? To what an elevation of sentiment does this exalt us! We can look with calm countenance on an ocean of trouble, and say to the fiercest waves, "Ye are servants for our good." Nay, with the apostle St. Paul, even if the "outward man perish," we can call it a "light affliction," which "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. Hence, too, we are enabled to see and estimate the propriety of that, to carnal sense, unintelligible injunction of the apostle, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," James i. 2. We feel that we are put in possession of a principle which shall subvert the machinations of the powers of darkness, and "survive the crash of worlds." Therefore we cling to it in every storm. When every other stay is gone, we cast ourselves upon the holiness of God; when racking pains, and alarming fears, render the spirit mute with anguish; so that we cannot, for the moment say, that God is love, or merciful, or gracious, still we can ejaculate between every pang, "But—thou art holy."

Christian reader, does thy religion possess a sanctifying power over thy heart? Is it a service of "profit" to the soul? Art thou advancing in holiness of heart and life? This is the one grand question. The minister and his flock must be holy. When Aaron entered the inner sanctuary, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" must be engraven in golden letters in the forefront of his mitre, Exod. xxviii. 36.

Art thou consecrated by the imposition of hands to be a minister of the Gospel? See that thine heart be wholly consecrated to the Lord. Preach to others, but be not thyself a cast-away, 1 Cor. ix. 27. God hath made thee a keeper of the vineyards, but does conscience whisper, that the vineyard of thine own heart, thou hast not kept? Cant. i. 6. Examine diligently; prove thine own self. The habit of teaching others, is most deceitful as to ourselves. We, who are called to minister, occupy a post of two-fold danger. O man of God, that art devout at the altar, and eloquent in the pulpit, what art thou in thy closet? Is it thy earnest desire and prayer to be freed from every inward as well as outward sin? Are thy petitions fervent to the Spirit of holiness to "cleanse the thoughts of thy heart by his heavenly inspiration?" Is thy ministry conducted with daily and especial prayer for the Spirit's guidance in wisdom and knowledge, soundness of mind, and integrity of purpose?—and for the Spirit's blessing on thy flock, thy household, and thyself, by means of the preached word, the prayers of faith, and the sealing sacraments?

Or art thou a hearer of the word? What "*profit*" dost thou gain? Art thou accumulating spiritual wealth? The riches of heaven is the pure gold of holiness. Christ counsels thee to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, Rev. iii. 18. Buy it without money, Isa. lv. 1. Purchase it by prayer. Ask for it. Seek to be freed from sin. Set thyself against one iniquity after another. Put them all aside. Keep them in check. Be not afraid to detect them. Learn to count them your enemies. Therefore hate them. Cut off open sins, and heart-sins. Allow not one wilful transgression; and search out all thy short-comings and omissions. Put off evils; put on also virtues. Begin to regard thy spiritual wants as of greater importance than thy temporal cravings. Hunger and thirst after RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is the meat of which the world knows not. Is it the food after which thy soul longs? Dost thou strive to be void of offence before God and man? Is it thy study to keep thy conscience quick, and tender, and clean? Is thy spiritual sensibility increasing? Art thou able to say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes?" Job xlii. 5, 6. Art thou walking in the light, and consequently able to discern more clearly than before? When thy thoughts wander, when desires rise, when love grows cold, art thou instantly on the watch? Dost thou mourn to find it so? Dost thou ingenuously confess it, or dost thou pass it over as a small thing? Is there a godly jealousy at work within thee? Dost thou strive, with the Spirit working in thee mightily, to bring *every* thought into obedience to Christ Jesus? 2 Cor. x. 5. Art thou filled with a heavenly ambition to be restored to thine original, but forfeited, likeness to the image of God? Gen. i. 26, 27; Col. iii. 10. This is a noble desire. The Spirit of God alone implanted it. Even forgiveness is not in itself to be compared to this. It is easy, it is natural, it is selfish, to long for safety, and wish for happiness, and deliverance from punishment. But to sigh for *holiness*, to pant after freedom, not merely from condemnation, but from the sin that causes it, is the true, the heavenly, the eternal principle of spiritual life. Therefore the Saviour pronounces his benediction on all such, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8.

When, then, O afflicted Christian, thou art cast down and disquieted—when sin tempts thee—when even the Scripture distresses thee, which declares that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14: still trust in God, for thou shalt yet praise him for the help of his countenance, Psa. xlii. 11. Remember thy Saviour's benediction, to strengthen thee. Remember the will of God for thy sanctification, to encourage thee. Remember the gift of the Holy Spirit the sanctifier, to help thee, to work in thee, to re-create thee after the image of Jesus in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. iv. 24. Remember the precious promises are given to make thee a partaker of the Divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Remember that thy sorest trials are sent for thy profit, to make thee a partaker of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. Keep steadfastly therefore, in the highway of holiness, Isa. xxxv. 8. It will conduct thee to that land, where, in perfect light, thou shalt see what good reasons thou hadst to triumph over every trial and difficulty, replying to them all, "But —God is holy."

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THE CONTRAST.

VERSES 4, 5, 6.—*Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

THE history of a soul's struggle to maintain its conscious dependence upon God, is deeply interesting and instructive. When lively love and gratitude occupy the heart; when conscience condemns not for any special sin; when faith takes hold of one or more of the exceeding great and precious promises, as, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee;" then indeed our happiness abounds, our joy promises to be perpetual; God appears to be all love, all graciousness. But when these are gone; when a denunciation instead of a promise stands most vividly before the mind; when conscience sounds an alarm in all our faculties—when fears within, instead of love—fightings without, instead of songs of gratitude;—and when perplexity unnerves us on every side, then indeed we feel that our own strength is rottenness, and that the wisdom and righteousness of man are utterly insufficient to bring us into the haven of peace. Like a ship in the storm, the soul loses one stay after another. The sails of love and gratitude are torn; the rudder of faith unshipped; the anchor of hope broken; and the compass of the word too much neglected. Despair begins to paralyze all exertion. But the Captain was once in as desperate a condition, and was rescued. Or perhaps some obscure individual on board asserts there was once a vessel saved from similar danger. Instantly the feeble crew gain strength, and that rallying word seems like life from the dead. "If others, why may not we be saved?" Just so is it with the soul. When we cannot strengthen ourselves on the promises by faith, we take refuge in God's providence by sense. When memory fails to recall the deliverances and mercies which we have ourselves experienced, we next endeavour to meditate on those of others. This has afforded seasonable relief to many of God's people in hours of trial; therefore it is highly advantageous to be acquainted with the memoirs of tried and advanced Christians, especially with the narratives of Scripture Saints. See how the apostle James encourages to patience. He does not merely say, "Behold, we count them happy which endure," but he adds, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James v. 11. This, then, is a scriptural mode of encouragement. It is an argument of two-fold power. Our Lord here employs it for the double purpose of influencing his Father, and of encouraging himself.

This passage is a continuation of that filial acknowledgment by which he glorified God in the preceding verse. It is as though he would say, "I have declared for myself, thou art holy. I further testify that though clouds and darkness be round about thee now to my experience, yet our fathers trusted in thee in their deepest trials, and found thee holy too." He repeats the term in the 4th verse, "They trusted in thee; they trusted." He reiterates the same idea in the 5th, "They cried unto thee; they trusted in thee:" as if he would feed his faith on theirs, and increase his own trust by enlarging upon that which they exhibited. Or rather as if he would imply that he also "trusts," and "trusts" as they did;

that he still cried, still trusted, and therefore why should there be such a difference between his experience and theirs? It is a powerful mode of pleading our own cause, when we put it into the same form with another that has obtained a successful issue. Christ here expresses that success in an exquisitely appropriate manner. First, the direct and effectual agency of God himself is intimated, "Thou didst deliver them." Next, this fact is stated with double reference, "They were delivered" as to their persons; they were "not confounded" as to their expectations. What a series of powerful arguments these verses contain. First, "Our fathers," therefore we their children should follow their example. Secondly, "trusted in thee," therefore thou art worthy to be trusted. Thirdly, "Thou didst (powerfully) deliver them;" therefore thou canst deliver me. Fourthly, "Thou didst (willingly) deliver them;" therefore thou mayest be willing to deliver me. Fifthly, "They cried unto thee;" therefore will I cry and never cease. Sixthly, "They trusted, and were not confounded;" I too will trust, and surely I shall not be confounded.

Overcome, as it were, with a sense of God's great mercy to the fathers of old time—painfully conscious of that desertion, under the darkness of which he was hanging upon the cross, our Lord next utters this disparaging contrast, as if in justification of his Father's absence from him, "But I am a worm." This is an expression of feeling, of that strong feeling which must be expressed in strong terms. But assuredly, it was also right feeling. Christ spoke what he felt—he felt what was correct. God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, with whom his spirit had always enjoyed full and conscious communion, were now absent. The spirit of Christ was thus left to feel its contiguity with the flesh. As the lonely prisoner becomes more sensitive to the gloom of his dun geon walls, when the friend whose visit cheered him has withdrawn; so the spirit of Christ, having no one now with whom to commune, had its attention powerfully called to its earthly tenement. Though pressed beyond measure with its own sorrows, it could not be insensible to the sufferings of the companion flesh, quivering in its agony. Fully alive, then, to the weakness of his animal existence, closely pressed by its wants and pains, the Saviour felt himself placed by it on a level with the meanest of the creatures. "I am but flesh as they are. These pains tell me that I am of the earth—a piece of animated dust—an animal—a worm." Such appear to have been the Redeemer's feelings. He perceived that his flesh was as helpless as a worm—powerless and passive, that creature is crushed beneath the foot of man. Christ now felt his human nature to be void of all energy, or power of resistance, sinking under its own sufferings, and unable to aid his spirit in sustaining the heavy load. This expression therefore is not an exaggeration—not a mere burst of grief, such as we poor mortals use in our calamities. It was not a word weightier than his woe; it was a deliberate utterance; a melancholy but correct exclamation. Christ had become exquisitely conscious of the earthliness of his humanity; and we must carefully note that it is only of his flesh—of his inferior part—of his humanity, that he here speaks; and when he calls it "a worm," we are to understand that he felt it to be nothing but utter weakness.

So little accustomed, however, are we to regard our Divine Master as having really "MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION," Phil. ii. 7, that we are tempted to turn away from such representations, and deem them unbecoming. How little, consequently, can we appreciate the condescension of our Lord! How unable must we be to sympathize with him when he most requires it!

If our Lord were really brought to such a depth of sorrow, and such an extremity of feeling, surely we ought not to withhold our sympathies from him. Well may he exclaim in the words of the prophet, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger," Lam. i. 12. Should we, then, to gain a fuller insight into the depth of our Saviour's sufferings, prosecute this inquiry, it may be asked, If our Lord could say with truth "I am a worm," how could he add, "and no man?" We answer, that the very same sorrow which suggested the one expression, dictated also the other. He really was to his own sensible and oppressed apprehension, but a piece of animated matter, a worm, and not what man is, or what man ought to be.

Let us consider these two points; they are of essential importance to a clear and full understanding of this momentous subject. We say Christ, to his own sensible apprehension, was not what man is, or what man ought to be. First, he was not what man is. Man is a piece of animated matter—so was Christ; but man is a piece of sinful matter—not so Christ. His humanity was unstained and spotless; his flesh had the nature, but not the sinful nature of man. Christ, therefore, is not what man is. His humanity, consequently, is not improperly or inappropriately compared to, and denominated, a worm. Indeed, that despised creature's animal life has a resemblance and affinity to that of Christ, which ours does not possess. All the wants and feelings of its nature exist without the least admixture of sin. Its pain and suffering is simple feeling, unalloyed and unsullied. And though two human beings were now in the same bodily pain as our Lord, yet we would rather compare the agony and writhings of a worm, than those of these crucified men, to the sufferings of our immaculate Redeemer. In fallen man, there cannot exist a pure, simple, uncompounded feeling. Cotemporaneously with every movement of our flesh, there is excited some unworthy, or sinful, desire or emotion. Self-complacency, pride, contempt, disdain, resistance, defiance, impatience, anger, revenge, are not unlikely, some one or more, to be engendered in the breast of every man, under either deserved, or unmerited, sufferings and reproach. But the bodily sensations of Christ never produced, and were never accompanied by, any such emotions. His words and feelings, under his several sufferings, had no more sin than have the writhings of a tortured worm. He suffered simple unmitigated agony. It is no objection to reply that a worm cannot entertain these sentiments, by the very constitution of its nature; for this only brings to view another and more striking point of the comparison. It was just so with Christ. By the constitution of his nature, he could not entertain these sentiments; no such emotions served to counteract the intensity of his pains. Therefore, the resemblance is more perfect, and the Saviour, conscious of its completeness, might well say, "I am a worm and no man"—not what man is.

Secondly, I am not what man ought to be. Man was created in the perfection of his nature, a being "very good," as he came from the hands of his Creator. It may be that he was not only beautiful in himself, but also bright with the reflection of his Maker's glory. A shining radiance, such as remained on the face of Moses for days after his communion with Jehovah, might well be imagined to have glowed from the whole body of Adam, who lived and moved and had his being in God. If this were so, what a marked and instantaneous loss did our first parents sustain by their transgression! The conjecture serves to account for their immediate discovery of nakedness. But, be that as it may, this we certainly know, that man lost the balance of power amongst his members. The harmony between his spirit and his flesh was destroyed: he became subject to pain and weariness, to hunger and thirst, to toil and sweat, to sorrow, sickness, and death. When, therefore, Christ came into the human nature, he found himself not what man was, or what man ought to be. Born, however, as we are, in the fallen condition, we feel not its detriments; we possess no means of comparison; we never knew any thing better. But it was not so with our Lord and Master. He possessed a previous existence, and knew, not only in what goodly condition Adam was created, but also the glory of his own existence before the world was made. Christ was a real living metempsychosis. The only one that our earth has ever seen. He brought the feelings of another state of being into this. He occupied humanity with recollections of Deity. Though this notion of the heathens, as they explain and understand it, is both false and foolish, yet it has a foundation in truth. Here is an instance of it in the person of Christ. And when Christ came into the human nature, he might well exclaim, "I am no man. I am not such as I made him; nor am I what man ought to be."

Endeavour, O Christian, to enter, as fully as possible, into your Saviour's feelings when he tabernacled in your flesh. We may illustrate them by this doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Suppose this heathenish tenet to be exemplified in the case of a renowned and mighty conqueror. Suppose his soul at death to have passed into the body of a worm. Imagine his lofty and ambitious spirit confined for a time to this miserable house of clay —wriggling his length along where his victorious troops had marched. Endeavour to conceive what must be the feelings of a human spirit in such a condition. With what force must he feel the change! How constantly would he be galled and fretted with his sluggish flesh! With what emphasis would he exclaim, "I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Life would be a perpetual burden, unrelieved, save when communing with his former self. Imagine, then, this only remaining source of consolation to be closed; all pleasing recollection of the past, and hope for the future, eclipsed; and his attention attracted by nothing but the sensations of his earthly part. What a distressing moment of existence! What a revolting consciousness of his present self must be oppressing him! We will pursue the analogy no further; it is one of the gross doctrines of debasing heathenism! How unlike our pure exalting Christianity! Yet it illustrates this subject. What we have here supposed of debasement and humiliation in the experience of a human spirit, sunk not only to the level, but to the very identity, of a creeping thing, is nothing compared to that of God himself descending into human nature. An insect bears some proportion to man, but man bears none to the Most High. The sensations of a human spirit, pent up in an earthworm, are altogether inadequate to represent the feelings of the Son of God when embodied in human flesh. Confessedly "Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh." "For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." And that one Christ was now racked as with a double crucifixion—his body on the material, and his soul on the spiritual, cross. Satan was bruising him with assaults of temptation. Man was bruising him with reproach and despisings. It pleased the Lord to bruise him with desertion and the curse. The odious burden of sin was also bruising him. He himself abhorred the sins he was bearing away. Under this fourfold bruising, the agony of Christ's flesh was intense, and the anguish of his spirit overpowering. He felt his fleshly part sinking rapidly. Instead of aiding the spirit to endure, it was becoming a dead weight. Its sharp, shooting, pangs were like so many barbed arrows to his already wounded spirit. But for his union with the flesh, he could not have experienced these griefs. He had eternally dwelt in unalloyed, and uninterrupted bliss. His birth in flesh brought him into close and painful contact with another form of being. The Godhead was all peace, all glory; the manhood all grief, pain, and debasement. No wonder, then, that he complains against it, calls it a worm, and not what man ought to be.

The original is very expressive. It denotes a purple coloured worm—the cochineal insect, from which the bright and beautiful dye is made. Thus it is a most appropriate emblem of the Redeemer. It exhibits him in a threefold respect. First, as covered with the crimson sins of the world. Secondly, as scarlet with his own blood. Thirdly, as yielding by his death, that blessed dye which removes all our stains, and presents us without spot in the presence of Jehovah. The Saviour says, "I am as the crimson worm. I stand before God coloured with imputed sin. He treats me accordingly. All the fathers trusted in the Lord, and were severally delivered. Their expectations were not confounded; but I am as the worm, more valuable in death than life."

This figure and illustration is not without example in other parts of Scripture. Job was reduced to such a state of suffering and depression, that he exclaims, "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister," Job xvii. 14. Every individual of the human race is also represented as unclean before the great God, and compared to the same despised creature, Job xxv. 6. When God addresses the Jewish church with words of encouragement, he shows how fully he enters into her utter nothingness, and that he would not that she herself should forget it, by using this figure, "Fear not, thou worm of Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord," Isa. xli. 14.

It may be, and not unfrequently is, the experience of the Christian, to be brought into loneliness of spirit—enjoying no sensible communion with God—deprived also of the ordinances of religion and intercourse with pious friends. Through sickness, or disease, the memory may be weakened, and meditation on the past may have become almost an empty void. Fears and doubts may have closed the eye of hope, and shut out all comfortable prospect of the future. We seem, at such times, to be conscious to little more than the fact that we are alive. We begin to learn the strange lesson that self is a burden. In proportion to that degree of love to holiness which the Christian may previously have attained, so will be his detestation of that burden. He will feel, not only his nothingness, but his sinfulness. The one will impart a sensation of depression; the other of self-abhorrence. Should we hear him, while in this condition, giving utterance to his feelings, we might be tempted to imagine that he used terms by far too strong, exaggerated, and hyperbolical. If we have made little progress in the school of Christian experience, our astonishment becomes proportionably greater, and we the more readily conclude, that he does not seriously mean all that he expresses. Not unfrequently we detect ourselves putting the same construction on the recorded sentiments of the Scripture worthies. In reading some of the strong expressions of feeling, which, for instance, David, Job, Jeremiah, and Paul, employ, we are apt to receive them with considerable allowance; we imagine that they speak with morbid feelings, that they would not use such language at other times, and that they are not really such as they describe themselves to be. Not a little also of this feeling accompanies our perusal of the Gospels. We can hardly persuade ourselves that the Saviour, being God, *felt* the various emotions of grief and joy, the sensations of hunger, weariness, and pain, the trials of spirit, or tortures of flesh, of which we read; or that if he felt them, they could not make much impression. We have an indistinct conviction, that though there were the outward appearances of all these, yet that there was always a holy calm within, and that *his* breast could not verily be agitated with any thing like human sorrow.

This is an insidious and dangerous principle. To establish our own experience as the standard by which to judge that of others, is most destructive to the health of our own souls, as well as derogatory and calumnious of the work of grace in our fellow-creatures. We have no right to conclude that they over-state the case, merely because *we* have not felt the same. It is no objection, that they would not use that language at other times. They might not. But it does not, therefore, follow, that their lowest apprehension of themselves was incorrect or exaggerated. So far from this, truth compels us to assert that the strongest expressions of self-abhorrence and debasement which any fallen mortal has ever uttered, are far short of the reality. God's eye discerns, and God's purity abhors, in our sin-tainted nature, far more than any mere man has ever yet discovered. The human intellect can neither scan the height of Godhead glory, nor fathom the depth of human emptiness and pollution. The God-man had both before his eye at one glance. In full contrast He beheld them. And if sin, when merely imputed, could bring his holy and unsullied human soul to such a depth of depression, and such an extremity of anguish, how much more would inherent sin bring each of us, were we only capable of regarding it with correct, that is, *sanctified* apprehension? But it is impossible. A full view of sin, as it appears before the perfect God, could not be borne by mortals. And those of our race who have most clearly discerned it in themselves, who have most bitterly bewailed their condition, and who have employed the strongest expressions of self-abhorrence, have only advanced a little beyond their fellows, but have never wholly learned the awful reality, and, consequently, cannot have over-stated it. None but a perfectly holy being can take a full and perfect view of sin. Those who once were pure, as the angels that sinned, know from what a height they have fallen, but it is impossible, with their evil nature, that they can form a just estimate of their present condition. Much less can we of ours.

Born in the flesh, we know nothing higher, till the Spirit of God implant heavenly desires. Then we begin to know, and feel, and hate, our native condition. And in proportion as the mental eye is fixed on the purity and holiness of heaven, brought near to us in Jesus Christ, so is our knowledge of our sinfulness, and our abhorrence of our pollution. If such be the feelings of a heart sanctified only in measure, what must have been the sensations and sentiments of the Holy One of God, when living amongst men! He came into the world purer than the breath of morning. He shone upon the earth as free from sin as the sun is free from darkness. But the brightness of his holiness only brought to light the universality and corruption of sin. He came from a region where the love of God beat high in every breast, and he now moved in one where love to self was the great ruling principle. Imagine a son living in a territory where his father has been dethroned, and from which he has been banished. He speaks on his behalf, and they will not hear; he tells them of his love, and they will not believe it. He invites them to join his cause, and at last gets only twelve men to attach themselves openly to his person. Imagine his ardent soul fettered by an enfeebled body. With a love that never tires, and a devotion that never slumbers, he has limbs, that fail with weariness, and eyes that close in sleep. His willing spirit finds the flesh unequal to the task. It acts as a perpetual clog. So was it with our blessed Lord. He lived in a camp of rebels, where all were traitors to the Most High. His fervent spirit was ever ready to discharge his great commission. But his human body needed continual rest, refreshment, and attention. And now that it was suspended on the cross in torture, our Lord felt to the utmost the weakness and nothingness of the flesh. 2 Cor. xiii. 4. Sinking under its own sufferings, it formed a striking contrast to the noble spirit, which the most protracted sorrows could not subdue. Therefore, he calls it a worm, a helpless thing, and speaks of himself as not possessing the endurance and energetic vigour of a man.

Let the depressed and sorrowing Christian learn from this how to extract consolation from true and scriptural distinctions. Our Lord marks what is peculiar to the flesh, but never condemns a sinless infirmity of the body. He accepts the homage of the heart, even when the outward posture seems to express the very contrary. Our Lord submitted to learn this by experience, that having been tried in all points as we are, he might be able to sympathize with us. See how in the garden, when shamefully left by his disciples to watch alone, he graciously supplied from his own knowledge that one only consideration which could extenuate their conduct. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Here is a distinction which the mourning Christian often overlooks. He condemns himself at times in matters which are referable only to physical causes. The state of his health, the tone of the nervous system, the influence of weather, are some of the agents which produce low and desponding thoughts. He charges himself with unbelief and distrust of God, and wishes to resemble others whom he sees calm and cheerful in their deportment. He forgets that such happy frames of mind may be as entirely owing to the influence of health and good animal spirits, as his own depression is the consequence of the reverse. Therefore, let him learn to distinguish between his flesh and his spirit. While he ought no more to rest contented with a desponding mind, than with a diseased body, yet let him be persuaded that the good Physician understands the cause of his depression. Let him not then shrink back from prayer under a sense of unworthiness. Let him not say, "*When I am in this state I cannot pray.*" You may, indeed, not be able to engage in prayer in the same manner as when in health; but remember, the Lord does not now desire you to do so, he only expects you to pray according to your state. This, indeed, is one of the great requisites in prayer. Let every man present himself before the Great High Priest in spirit, as did the diseased of every name in the days of his flesh. They never thought of approaching him as they were not, but as they were. If, then, your prayer must be short, let it be special. Lay open your case as it really is. Confess all you feel, and all you fear. Again and again, do the same. Conceal nothing. The Lord loves an open-hearted worshipper. Deplore the state of your bodily health, and of your mental constitution. He can give you balm for both. Ask, and he will give you a blessing. Return quickly with thanksgiving, and you shall obtain another.

But the desponding Christian may sink still deeper into the waters of trouble. He may be heard to say, "I find so many hinderances without and within. I cannot gain the mastery over my spirit. When I strive to pray, evil is present with me. When I would do good to others, some unworthy thought or motive suggests itself to my mind. I am nothing but sin. I can neither pray, nor love, nor glorify God, as I ought." This is a deep and painful experience; but it is also right and good. The conclusion is quite correct. The individual in himself is nothing but sin. And it is an unspeakable mercy to be so led of God as to have made the discovery. The stirring of the pool does not originate, but only manifests its corruption. What you now feel is only a bringing to light that which otherwise you would not have believed. It is no new thing. To God it was known long before. Even now the Holy One discerns in the dark depth of the heart, far more than the most desponding mind can detect. What then is the intention of the good Spirit in opening the eye upon the depravity within? It is to lead the Christian from self to Christ. We are long in the school of the Gospel before we learn our *utter nothingness.* Doctrinally, perhaps, we knew it at the very commencement. But there is a wide difference between theoretical and practical knowledge. It is easy to say, "I am a sinner, and can do nothing good of myself." Even while we so speak, there often lurks within us a secret expectation and desire to find somewhat good in our nature. We trust that after some years passed in a religious course, we may perceive such an increase of religious feeling as shall preclude wandering thoughts, unruly desires, coldness of affections, and forgetfulness of God. But we forget that the "old man" is so essentially evil that it cannot be made fruitful of good; that therefore Scripture speaks of it as "crucified;" and that we cannot get rid of it altogether while we live, and can only keep it in check—mortify it. We ought to remember that we are but as waste land being brought into cultivation by the great Husbandman; and that it is alone by his unceasing care, and regular implanting of good seed, that we yield any increase. Leave the finest garden alone, it soon becomes a wilderness. Who would suppose that in its clean and fruitful beds, lie countless seeds of noxious weeds? The heart of man is as a garden. Should it boast, let the Gardener leave it for a time, that it may learn what it is in itself. This the all-wise God sees it often necessary to do. Then the Christian discovers that the seeds of innumerable evils are in his heart: and after many years of wholesome culture and extended usefulness, he is astonished and grieved to find that nothing but sin is its native produce. All goodness in man is implanted. His righteousness is a reflection of that of Christ. To be at all pure and bright, we must revolve round the great Sun. The moon derives her light from the superior orb. In herself she is a dark ball. So is the Christian. He is fair through the comeliness which Christ puts upon him; but still he is black in his own nature. When he first discovers this, he feels confounded and paralyzed. Yet he ought to have known and remembered that he was always so. He never should have expected to have found it otherwise. It is good that he should no longer be self-deceived. His eye must be opened to the reality of his natural state, that he may be taught to reckon it as "dead," and so may never expect from it the living fruits of holiness.

But how then shall he obtain peace of mind, if he is always to retain a consciousness of this sin-seeded heart? He must still further learn the art of extracting comfort and consolation from sound scriptural distinctions Let him mark the difference between the "old" and "the new man" within him. Both live; but the one is under a continual process of mortification; the other of vivification. He must cherish the life of the latter, and hasten the dying of the former. This is the condition, the work, the warfare, of every Christian on this side of the grave. Unless therefore he be able to distinguish the "old man and his deeds," which is to be put off, from the "new man and his deeds," which is to be put on, he must be often reduced to a state of spiritual perplexity, and perhaps despair. But he need not. Let him cease to expect any thing good from his old nature, and so "PUT IT OFF," and his perplexity will be at an end. Christ is the source of all within him that is good. In himself he is only an engrafted stock. Let the orchard teach. No man expects the golden fruit from the stock, but from the graft. The growth of the latter we cherish and protect, all the shoots of the former we destroy. The whole tree, then, is a twofold thing, a perfect picture of the Christian. Here is both an old nature and a new. In the former there is nothing good; we therefore describe it, and all that proceeds from it, as radically bad. Though the tree were laden with fruit, yet if the stock could speak it would say, and say with truth, "In me resides nothing that is good." Just so is it with the Christian. He separates himself from himself. He employs the life of the new nature to strive against the movements of the old. Overcome, however, at times by its stubborn and obstinate attempts, he exclaims from the anguish of an inward conflict, that seems tearing him asunder, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. vii. 24, margin. Here, then, is the only fountain of his peace and comfort, that while thus wretched he can look away from himself to Christ, and thank God for such a Saviour. This he does with the greater eagerness and determination, because he feels compelled to declare, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," verse 18. Accordingly, he never expects to derive any peace, or strength, or comfort from it; he never willingly allows it to exert itself; he denies his consent to its suggestions; he frowns with disapprobation upon all its movements; he mourns over every successful sally it may make from its prison; he wills not that it should ever think or speak within him; and is so set against this restless foe that he repudiates its every doing, and says, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," verses 17—20.

Here, then, is a remarkable and important distinction which the Christian learns to make; and while he makes it, he ought to be as conscious of the existence of the one nature, as of the other. Remember, it is, "IF I DO THAT I WOULD NOT." There must be two wills, the one working against the other. If not—if we consent to the "deeds" of the old man, we must refrain altogether from this language of the apostle. There must be a desire, and an endeavour, we say not in what degree; but still there must be an honest, sincere, and continual endeavour against sin, and a cordial desire after conformity to the law of God; otherwise we shall awfully deceive our souls, and be guilty of turning the doctrines of truth into licenses of sin. In this same scripture, the apostle states that he possessed also "a delight in the law of God after the inward man," verse 22, and a will intent on doing good. If, then, the lukewarm professor of religion comfort himself with a partial and perverted view of some of the verses of this remarkable chapter, overlooking these, he handles the word of God deceitfully, turns his grace into licentiousness, and ruins his own soul. The true Christian does not act after this manner However weak and feeble may be the buddings of the new nature within him, he cherishes them with care He determines, with the help of God, to struggle against every sin that shall be found lurking in his breast. He resolves, in the strength of the Most High, that he will never cease to fight against the law of sin which is in his members. And while he is persuaded that the strife must continue till death separate the combatants, he is also assured that sin shall not have the dominion. Instead therefore of giving up the warfare in despair, at every fresh appearance of the old nature, at every renewed struggle which it makes, he learns to be more active and vigorous, to rely more on the Strong for strength, and to keep a more watchful eye, that he may not lose the mastery, but retain every thought in subjection to the will of Christ.

THE REPROACH.

VERSE 6.—*A reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

THESE words form a part of the comparison which the Saviour had instituted between himself and the fathers of old time. In the depth of his own affliction, he meditated on their faith, and on their deliverances. The success which attended their supplications proved that God was the gracious hearer and answerer of prayer. But the difference of his experience is painfully trying. He does not enjoy that communion with the Father of all to which they were admitted. He appears to be forgotten. His prayers and cries bring no relief. The longer his trial continues, it increases in severity. No mitigation can be obtained from any quarter. Heaven is closed against him; and "I am," he remarks, "a reproach of men, and despised of the people."

Reproach is a peculiarly painful species of trial, and formed a large portion of our Saviour's sorrow. It is a keen cutting weapon. Even consciousness of innocence cannot altogether prevent the smarting of its wound. Reproach is a many-barbed arrow. It implies reflection, censure, disappointment, and contempt, on the part of him who casts it; and supposes deception, hypocrisy, detection and disgrace, on the part of him who deserves it. Christ suffered all this; though perfectly innocent, he was treated as if utterly guilty. His tender spirit felt that treatment bitterly; his was no stoic's heart—a hard ball of selfishness. From the purity and perfection of his nature, our Lord must have had exquisite susceptibility and tenderness of feeling. See him at the grave of Lazarus. How full of sympathetic emotion! A philosopher of the world, would have thought only of the stupendous miracle he was about to accomplish. But not so our Lord: when he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. The shortest verse of Scripture is the most affecting, "Jesus wept," John xi. 35. While enduring the daily trials of life, and the attendant afflictions of death, his knowledge of the glory that should follow, did not render him insensible to any of the sufferings that went before. Reproach formed a large part of these sufferings.

Many of our Lord's countrymen vainly expected that he would assume the power, and glory, of an earthly king. His miracles made them regard him as some great one, if not the Messiah. Now, therefore, the bitterness of their disappointment is proportionably increased. Instead of blaming themselves for entertaining hopes which he had never sanctioned, they condemned him for this inglorious termination of their own presumptuous speculations. Of all those who reproached our Lord, it is quite consonant to our knowledge of human nature to conceive that none would be more forward in this species of persecution, than those who had once professed to be his disciples. Of these, there was a considerable number. The triumphant entrance into the holy city, but a few days before, would naturally tend to swell their ranks, and strengthen their expectations. The active part which many of the citizens took in that affair must have made them marked men to the chief priests and rulers. Conscious of this fact, they would now take care to make themselves conspicuous as his revilers. With cordial ill-will, with blasted hopes, with love turned to gall, would they assail him, on every possible opportunity. We can imagine them waiting till he should issue from the Hall of Judgment, and then pouncing on their victim with envenomed tongues. As infuriated swarms pursue, and hover round, the object of their hatred, each eager to inflict a sting; so with bitter words and angry gesticulations, would these attend his progress to the cross. Impatient of his feeble steps, they would urge him forward, justling, pushing, buffeting—some before, some behind, many on both sides, would pour their malicious imprecations upon his head. His grieved ear might recognize a voice which formerly craved his blessing; his meek eye might meet the countenance of a former friend turned into fury. A menacing hand which he had once healed, might now be held up against him; and ever and anon as he advanced, one fresh upbraider after another might step up to his side, and screech reproachfully in his face. But when all were collected together on Mount Calvary, when they beheld him raised on high between the two thieves, then, in one torrent of abuse, would they give vent to their reproaches, "Thou art the man that deceived us. Thou calledst thyself the Christ. Now have we found thee out; thy miracles were done in league with Beelzebub; thy fair speeches and holy words were all hypocrisy; God has not suffered thee to escape; thou badest us believe in thee; thou saidst thou wert come from heaven, and wouldst take us thither. Now thou art where thou shouldst be, crucified with thieves, and viler than they."

This shameful conduct was not confined to the low rabble; to coarse and vulgar men, habituated to intemperate language. The narrative of the Gospel informs us that the rulers and chief priests, forgetting the dignity of their station, joined with the mocking multitude; "And the rulers also with them derided him," Luke xxiii. 35. Here were men of polite and varied attainments, superior in rank and fortune, bearing office in the spiritual and civil government of the holy city—scribes, and pharisees, and elders of the Sanhedrim, congregated at a public execution, and not only sanctioning the slanderous multitude, but themselves acting as tormentors to the dying. They despised the Nazarene, as they called him; they disdained his ignoble parentage, and humble occupation as a carpenter; they repudiated him as the associate of mean and vulgar persons, nay, of publicans and harlots. They scouted him as an impostor of the vilest description; a profane and impious individual, who encouraged the people to break the sabbath, and despise the holy law. Every thing that was evil, detestable, and damnatory, in their eyes, seemed to meet in the person of this crucified criminal. They deemed him a traitor to his country, by seeking to make himself a king, refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar, and so attempting to involve Judea in the horrors of a civil war. As a worker of miracles, they recognized him only as a dealer with evil spirits, a magician of superior art of conjuration, an agent of hell in league with Beelzebub. And lastly, they reviled him as a blasted being, whom Divine Providence would not suffer to live, because of his atrocious blasphemies, in making himself equal with God.

Such was the light in which they regarded the crucified Jesus. Obstinately refusing to examine the credentials of his commission, they perverted every fact and argument that seemed favourable to his cause, wilfully closing their eyes against the light of truth. And here we behold them giving utterance to all the contempt, hatred, and malice, with which their breasts were filled.

Bitter, indeed, was this ingredient of Christ's cup. In the sixty-ninth psalm, which bears a close resemblance to the twenty-second, *reproach* is the principal sorrow enumerated of our Lord's many sufferings. See verses 7, 12, 19, 20, 26. Five words in the 20th verse, express all that can be said as to the wickedness perpetrated, and its effects on the innocent victim. "REPROACH HATH BROKEN MY HEART." It was so broken, that he could not answer. He ENDURED the contradiction of sinners against himself. It is a hard task to continue silent when we are wrongfully accused! To refrain for any length of time from retort or expostulation, when reproached, is more than any mere man is able to accomplish. But our Lord was perfect in patience. He has recourse to God, to whom alone he unfolds his grief, and unburdens his breaking heart. Nor does he pray for the silencing of this reproach as regards himself, but earnestly deprecates its effect upon his disciples. Hear how he implores his Father's interposition on their behalf, "Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face," Psa. lxix. 6, 7.

Christ was accustomed to reproach. It was his daily portion at home and abroad—in the village and in the city—with relatives and amongst strangers. When living in the quiet retirement of domestic life, his brethren, his near relatives, said to him, "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world," John vii. 3, 4. To their reproachful insinuations, Christ uttered not an angry word. When, at another time, he was sleeping, during a storm, in the hinder part of the ship, his disciples awoke him with this reproach, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Mark iv. 38. The great meekness of the Saviour rendered him peculiarly liable to suffer from the rudeness, impatience, and insolence, of all who saw him.

This characteristic suffering of our blessed Master must be experienced, more or less, by all those "that will live godly in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. iii. 12. If we be faithful to our duty as Christians; if we follow our Lord's example, and "testify to the world that its works are evil," John vii. 7, we shall certainly be partakers of our Master's ignominy. It has been so from the beginning. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, Heb xi. 26. The apostle Paul declares of himself, "I take pleasure in reproaches for Christ's sake," 2 Cor. xii. 10. Our Lord kindly forewarns us to expect, and most graciously encourages us to bear, this painful trial, saying, "Blessed are ye, when men shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake," Luke vi. 22. And Peter, as if remembering the words which the great Teacher had uttered, writes thus, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified," 1 Peter iv. 14. Surely then, when we consider the height of glory to which we shall be exalted, and this depth of sorrow, in which our gracious Surety was immersed on our account, we shall not shrink back from an open confession of our gratitude and obligation to him, and shall willingly conclude with the apostle, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach," Heb. xiii. 13.

Consider, O Christian, what the Saviour's reproaches were. There is not an indignity that can be named, which was not made a matter of wilful misrepresentation against the Lord of glory. Even the most innocent, and inconsiderable, things were made subjects of bitter and vilifying observation. "Is not this the carpenter's son?—how knoweth this man letters?—can any good thing come out of Nazareth?—Thou art a Samaritan!—this fellow casts out devils by the prince of the devils;—this man is a sinner; he is a sabbath-breaker; he deceiveth the people; he blasphemeth; he is a friend of publicans and harlots; he is a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber; he hath a devil, and is mad."

Such were some of the reproaches that were heaped upon our meek and holy Lord while he lived, and doubtless none of them were forgotten or softened by his enemies when he was dying. Through the goodness of His providence, we are at present exempted from open persecution in our beloved land. There is no cross of nails and wood erected now for the Christian, but there is one of words and looks which is never taken down. It is the will of God that we should be "freed from sin," and be "made perfect" *through sufferings.* Were there no cross, there should be no crown. Our nature must be purged. We never know ourselves till we are tried; consequently, we cannot fight against our besetting sins till we be made acquainted with them. Self must be crucified; but instead of enduring the trial with reluctance, and with many efforts to escape, the Christian should go through it willingly, and esteem it an honour to become a partaker of his Master's sufferings. The apostle Paul strove as for a crown, to attain to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Phil. iii. 10. He counted it his highest earthly honour; he regarded it as a pledge of eternal glory. Endeavouring constantly to avoid every appearance of evil, as did our Master, we shall yet find, like him, that our words and actions are subjected to the most unexpected misconstructions. The world does not understand the principles on which the Christian acts, and must therefore interpret all he does according to those by which it is itself actuated. The Christian, therefore, when tried by any sore and bitter reproach, should consider it in a fourfold respect. First, *in regard to the reproach itself;* it is only words—sounds that vanish in the air as soon as they are uttered. Secondly, *in regard to those who vilify and misrepresent him;* that it may be from no personal malice, but the unavoidable result ot the application of their own worldly principles; that therefore they are to be pitied, and even if evidently malicious, are to be prayed for and forgiven. Thirdly, in *regard to himself;* that it can do him no harm, but much good, if he bear it patiently. And lastly, *in regard to his God and Saviour;* that it is a token of his love, a proof of his own discipleship, and a pledge of future honour and glory.

Let him consider also what infamy and dishonour the men of this world willingly endure for the sake of sinful pleasures, and mere temporary profit. Shall the servant of God, then, be outdone in zeal by the servants of Satan? They care not for the disgrace if they only attain their end. They calculate loss of character by the gain it brings, and the happiness by which it is counterbalanced. If they win, they smile, and care not who despise. When, then, the Christian thus witnesses the power of an evil principle, shall he not be ambitious to exhibit the superior energy of those that are heavenly and eternal? He knows, too, that however much he may be reviled by others, no one has so much reason to despise him, as he has himself. Lying low, therefore, in his own estimation, and humbling himself in secret to the very depths, he should put it out of the power of the most slanderous enemy, either to sink him lower in his own opinion than he has already cast himself, or to accuse him of a single wrong done to a fellow-creature.

Therefore let the Christian in this trial, as in every other, earnestly pray for the supply of the Spirit of grace. Without His indwelling and sustaining power, we always fail—we cannot but fail. To be despised and reproached, will naturally, and immediately, excite sinful resistance, anger, and perhaps retaliation. But with the inworking aid of the Holy Spirit, the Christian will be enabled to exhibit patience, meekness, and gentleness; and to return kindness for their malice, love for their hatred, and prayers for their reproaches.

THE MOCKERY.

VERSE 7.—*All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying—*

DURING the three hours in which our Lord hung on the cross, previous to the commencement of the darkness, he observed the conduct of the assembled multitude.

The behaviour of the unfeeling crowds who press to witness an execution is nearly the same in all countries, and in all ages. In our own Christian land, there are not wanting disgraceful scenes of tumultuous acclamation, when a miserable fellow-creature is being launched into eternity. The hiss, the scorn, the laugh, the execrations, mark not only their indignant feelings at his wickedness, but also their own destitution of that nobleness of pity, and solemnity of heart, which should characterize every rational being at such a moment. But man is a fallen, selfish being—" commixture strange of good and evil." Prejudice and passion obliterate the stirrings of humanity, and convert us into fiends. What else is a mocker at calamity? God has no pleasure in the sorrows of his creatures. The malignity of Satan finds congenial food in the most painful torments. But surely man joins in Satan's laugh, only when he has Satan's spirit.

How bitter is the laugh of scorn! How cruel is disdain and mockery! Jesus was here tried to the utmost. All that men could do in this way was done. The women joined the scornful men. The rich took part with the poor. The chief priests demeaned themselves to a level with the lowest of the crowd. Forgetting self-respect, and even decency of manners, every thing was sacrificed to the gratification of reviling Christ. Saving in the little band of true disciples, there was exhibited one universal mockery over this congregated mass of human beings. The smile of contempt, the jeer of ridicule, the loud laugh of derision, were all employed against the Lord. Instead of sympathizing in his sorrow, they were rejoicing and exulting over his distress. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn." Here there was no mistake. A dejected spirit is apt to imagine evils. But Jesus had experienced this treatment, too frequently before, to misunderstand it now. When he entered the chamber of death, and comforted Jairus, it is said of the people in the room, that "they laughed him to scorn," Matt. ix. 24. It was needful that the Redeemer should be tried in every possible way; that he should be "tempted in all points like as we are." This was doubly necessary. First, that he should be proved to be "yet without sin;" and, Secondly, that he should thus be able from his own experience to sympathize fully in the sorrows of his people.

Ridicule is at all times bad—to all persons painful—and from any individual rude and disgraceful. We dishonour ourselves by employing it. At best it is a punitive weapon, never a healing medicine. If it banish an offence from the manner, it sinks one deeper into the heart. Of all retaliative weapons, it seems most like that which an evil spirit would put into our hands. It defends self, and wounds an opponent, but never does real good to either. The satirist is dreaded, but not loved. We smile at his pictures of others, but we recoil from his company. Yet the smile is sinful, which attends a sinful deed. Did we love our neighbour, as we love ourselves, we should as sorely feel, and certainly reprove, the ridicule that injures him, as we do that which is directed against ourselves. So would Jesus have felt. He never listened to a backbiter, or a satirist. The first attempt would have called forth his disapprobation. Yet he here endured it in his own person without murmur or complaint. He heard all that the company of mockers could say against him. It is written of the persecuted saints, and may be especially affirmed of the Saviour, "He had trial of cruel mockings." Nor were his revilers contented with opprobrious epithets. Their malevolence was too great to find vent only in words. Signs and gestures, movements and gesticulations, must increase its emphasis, and assist its utterance. The evangelists give us a full account of their shameful doings. Matthew says, "They that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads." Mark adds, "Likewise the chief priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others, himself he cannot save." Mark xv. 31. Luke informs us that "the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar," Luke xxiii. 36.

Mockery accompanied the Saviour from the garden of Gethsemane till he expired on Calvary. Judas set the example with his insidious kiss. The men that apprehended him mocked him. The officers at the several courts mocked him. The chief priests, scribes, and pharisees, mocked him. The high priest himself, Caiaphas, mocked him. The servants of his house, and others, surrounded the Saviour, and mocked him. They smote him with their staves, and with the palms of their hands—they did spit in his face—they plucked off the hair—they blindfolded him; then they did buffet him with their fists, and said, "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" Matt. xxvi. 68. Herod and his men of war mocked him, and set him at nought—arraying him in a gorgeous robe, they sent him away as a laughing stock to whence he was brought. Pilate regarded him as a weak, inoffensive creature, and jestingly asked him, "What is truth?"—brought him forth, saying, "Behold the man"—and sent him to crucifixion with this mock title, "The King of the Jews." The Roman soldiers mocked him with a most perfect mockery. They acted it to the very life. They procured a crown—it was of thorns; royal garments—they were a cast-off purple vest, and a scarlet robe; a sceptre—it was a reed. They paid him homage as a king—it was mock-kneeling, laughter, and derision; they lavished their honours upon him—their salutation was a scoff, "Hail! king of the Jews!" their gifts were not gold, but strokes—not frankincense, but spitting—not myrrh, but mockery. When he was led away to Golgotha, a mocking multitude followed him. His feeble frame, his tottering steps, his ghastly visage, were subjects of entertainment, ridicule, and biting sarcasm, to his enemies. Doubtless, his friends shared this ignominy. The weeping of the women would be mocked, their wailings derided, their gestures of grief pointed at with laughter.

All this too was perfectly gratuitous. The ceremonies of judgment had some show of necessity—the scourging, and the crucifixion, were ordered by the officers of justice. But to make mirth and mockery over a fellow-creature's sufferings, was the most wanton piece of cruelty that has ever been heard of. It was altogether without the least pretence of reason. The gratification of their own cruel and malicious propensities—the indulgence of their hatred, and spiteful feelings—and their mad desire to render Christ as miserable as it was possible to make him, were their only stimulants. Therefore they hurry him forward to Calvary, that they may set him up as their mark—a spectacle to the whole nation that abhors him, Isa. xlix. 7. There every species of mockery that can be thought of, is employed. They wag the head, shoot out the lip, make wide the mouth, draw out the tongue, wink with the eye, point with the finger, utter the jest, break forth with laughter, and jeer at him with the bitterest scorn.

Imagine this dreadful scene. Behold this motley multitude of rich and poor, of Jews and Gentiles. Some stand in groups and gaze. Some recline at ease and stare. Others move about in restless gratification at the event. There is a look of satisfaction on every countenance. None are silent. The velocity of speech seems tardy. The theme is far too great for one member to utter. Every lip, and head, and finger, is now a tongue. The rough soldiers, too, are busied in their coarse way. The work of blood is over. Refreshment has become necessary. Their usual beverage of vinegar and water, is supplied to them. As they severally are satisfied, they approach the cross, hold some forth to the Saviour, and bid him drink as they withdraw it. They know he must be suffering an intense thirst, therefore they aggravate it with this mockery of refresh ment. Cruel Romans! and ye, O regicidal Jews! was not death enough? Must mockery and scorn be added? On this sad day Christ made you *one* indeed! Dreadful unity! which constitutes you joint mockers and murderers of the Lord of glory!

Contemplating this scene with feelings of indignation, the Christian may be tempted to say, "Had I been there, I would not have joined this mocking multitude." Boast not so. Hadst thou been there, thou wouldst, without God's grace, have taken part with that cruel crowd. Say, hast thou done nothing to offend thy Master since last year? If conscience tell thee, thou hast often grieved him, now that he is in heaven, let calm reflection convince thee, that without restraining grace, thou also wouldst have mocked him in his sorrow upon the cross. All Jews and Gentiles are alike. Both classes equally need the Spirit of God. "As in water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man." What others did, we would, without sustaining grace, do also. Let us remember Peter, and be humble. The hour of trial proves how weak the very strongest are in themselves. Every Christian knows by experience, that he has not in every company, and on all occasions, acted and spoken as a valiant and faithful soldier of the cross. Remembering, therefore, how difficult it is, and how impossible in yourself, to stand, even for an hour, against the example of those around you; thank God, O Christian, that thy sins were there that day, and not thy person; lest, being ashamed to join a few weeping women, thou shouldst have been led away with the multitude to do evil, and been found with eye, and head, and finger, mocking the meek and suffering Saviour of the world!

THE TAUNT.

VERSE 8.—*He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

HERE are recorded some of the words, in which the scorn and mockery of our Lord's persecutors were embodied. How remarkable to find them in a psalm written so many hundred years before! We should be at a loss how to explain the fact, did not the apostle Peter inform us that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and "that the Spirit of Christ which was in them did testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," 1 Pet. i. 11. The comparison, then, of this and of similar passages of the Old Testament with the accounts given in the New, affords abundant proofs that it is so of a truth, and enables us triumphantly to conclude, "Surely these books were written by none other than the finger of the living God."

How exactly is this prophecy from the mouth of David, fulfilled by the crucifiers of our Saviour! Matthew informs us in the 27th chapter, verses 39—44, "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others: himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."

The taunts here enumerated, are bitter and cruel in the extreme. It is a five-pointed dart with which our Lord is pierced. First, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Second, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Third, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Fourth, "If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Fifth, "He trusted in God: let him deliver him, if he will have him."

To human nature it is always a severe mortification, to be exposed to this species of trial. Grievous indeed is it to have our words distorted to falsehood, converted into jest, retorted against ourselves, and blazed abroad to our discredit. Christ was now enduring this fourfold contradiction. Those very words by which he sought to save their souls, were now repeated only to ruin his own cause. Those kind and healing miracles which he wrought for others, were now mentioned to show, by striking contrast, his own utter weakness. That confidence which he had always exhibited in the Divine love and providential care, were now alluded to only to prove that God would never acknowledge him. And that almighty power which he had exhibited, was now challenged to give one other proof of its existence, that all his enemies might be immediately convinced and converted.

This was a cruel dilemma to invent. Either Christ must now give them the proof required, or else that cause, which was dearer to him than life, must receive its apparent death-blow. The alternative, too, which they presented was of a tempting nature. The chief priests, the rulers, the whole assembled multitude, were ready to acknowledge him to be the Messiah. By descending from the cross, all those who had come up to worship at Jerusalem would be converted, they would carry the account to the remotest corners, and all the Jewish people would embrace the Christian faith. When, too, our Lord could so truly say to himself, "I am the Son of God; I am the king of Israel; I am beloved of my Father; I do possess power to leave this cross;" this must, humanly speaking, have seemed the right moment to prove it, and have formed a strong temptation to exert it. To convert so many souls by a single act, might seem to man a sufficient reason for its performance, and to imply that it would be wrong to withhold it. We say, this must have proved a strong and overpowering temptation to mere human nature. And had Christ been only a man, as the Socinians blasphemously assert, he must have yielded to its influence. It is impossible to conceive how a mere man could have resisted such an appeal for the accomplishment of that very object for which he was now suffering, and by which those sufferings would be no longer necessary. But Christ, being God, and "not needing that any should testify of man," John ii. 25, knew that even this great miracle could have no saving effect upon their minds. He had declared before to his disciples, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," Luke xvi. 31. So hard and unimpressible by eternal things is the natural heart! But had even this great multitude been thus brought over to the new religion, how could that law be satisfied which demanded life for sin? Unless Christ had died, he could neither have overcome death, nor him that had the power of it, Heb. ii. 14. That atonement also, which he came to accomplish, must have remained incomplete. No acceptance, consequently, with the Judge, could have been found for the Surety, nor any acquittance for the debtors; and we should have remained outcasts from Paradise—temporary tenants of a sin-bound world, but eternal occupants of that place, whence light and bliss are for ever fled. But, blessed be God, the faith and hope of the Christian hang not, like those of the Socinian, on a fallible creature. He who was taunted on the mount of Calvary was THE ONLY WISE GOD OUR SAVIOUR, Jude 25. He knew how inconclusive were the reasonings of his enemies, how insidious their professions, and how utterly vain the greatest miracle to effect their conversion.

Our great Redeemer instantly repelled the temptations presented to his mind in these five taunts, but did not put aside the pain and suffering which they occasioned. Doubtless, there was a vast variety of reproachful epithets and accusations used on this occasion which are not recorded in the Gospels. But these are sufficient, as specimens, to show with what wanton cruelty our Lord was treated; and we can easily conceive, that of all the various taunts, none entered deeper than the last, into his human soul. It stings to the quick to be taunted with the futility of our confidence in God. Indeed, the Holy Spirit seems to have marked *this* as the most painful of all our Lord's reproaches, by causing it to be specially recorded in this prophetic psalm, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Little remembering that these words were prophesied in reference to the Messiah, the malicious revilers on Mount Calvary employed them to torment their victim: "He trusted in God," say they, "let him deliver him now if he will have him." This taunt is intended to insinuate, first, that the crucified Jesus did not trust in God;

secondly, that he had pretended to do so; thirdly, that if he trusted at all, it was of no avail; and fourthly, that God had quite cast him off, and would never acknowledge him. Such was the fiery dart with which men and devils assaulted our blessed Lord! To every true Christian, trust in God is as the apple of the eye. To Christ, it was his life, his all. To be tried here, therefore, was the sorest stroke of all. And we must remember, that while men were loudly vociferating this temptation in our Lord's ear, Satan and his legions were busily engaged in assaulting him with it, directly and immediately, upon his spirit. When Christ condescended to become a man, he made "trust in God" his refuge and strong tower. The Old Serpent knew this. By undermining the confidence of the first Adam in the Creator, he had procured his ruin, and obtained possession of the world. Now, therefore, he endeavoured, the more earnestly, to weaken this stronghold in the heart of the second Adam, that he might retain his dominion, and add a new trophy to his crown. He must also have been aware that this was the last, the decisive, conflict. He was now fighting for victory or death; his all was staked on one blow. While, therefore, his human allies assaulted the Redeemer's body, he assailed his soul. The grand point of attack was incessantly attempted; and nothing was left undone in order to shake the stability of Christ's reliance upon God. The moment chosen for this combined effort was the most appropriate that had ever occurred in the history of Christ. It is important to mark this. Satan is a subtle foe, a skilful leader; he selects choice temptations, and suitable seasons. Christ was now forsaken by his Father; that blissful presence in which he had always lived was now withdrawn. This, then, is the moment to tempt him to think that it is useless to confide in Jehovah any longer.

Instantly the spirits of evil press this temptation upon our Lord with inconceivable rapidity, variety, and power. The prince of this world came thus to Jesus, but found "NOTHING IN HIM," John xiv. 30. Not a thought, nor a feeling, nor the slightest inclination or desire, could the spiritual adversary excite in him to suit his purpose. All was truth and loyalty to God. Even in that dark hour of his desertion, Christ swerved not from allegiance of heart, nor did the slightest shade of doubt rise within his breast. Men might declare, and spirits of darkness insinuate, that God had forsaken him, and would never turn to him again, but the heart of the true Son repelled all their suggestions against his Father. He knew as well as they did, that God had forsaken him. Nay, more, he *felt* it—in his inmost soul he deplored it. But to that part of the temptation he could reply, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his acts. I bow to his unerring wisdom. I know there must be good reasons for his withdrawal." But to the second part of the temptation, that God would never acknowledge him again, Christ would not give way for a moment. The other was a matter of fact; this was a lie, and a libel on the character of the Most High. His word had declared that those who trusted in him should never be confounded. Though every appearance, therefore, was against the promises of God, yet would Christ reject appearances, and cling to the promises.

Imitate this example of the great Master. In the severest conflicts, stay yourself upon the faithfulness of that God who performs all his promises. Never let go your confidence: "it has great recompense of reward," Heb. x. 35. Whatever distress and darkness you experience for the present, whatever fiery darts are shot into your thoughts, by the adversary, still say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance," Psa. xlii. 5.

When you witness others tried as to their trust in God, flee to their help. It is a sore and dangerous temptation. Had you beheld your Lord taunted, you would have repelled the insinuations. Do so now in the members of his body. "Strengthen the weak, confirm the feeble, say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not, God will come and save you," Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. Discountenance all taunting language, it is a whisper from beneath. "God upbraideth not," James i. 5

THE APPEAL.

Verses 9, 10.—*But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.*

The bitter severity of all the taunts with which his enemies assail him, has no other effect than to lead the Saviour to make a direct appeal to his Father, to that very God who was hiding his face from him; and who was represented as refusing to acknowledge him. That appeal is set before us in these two verses. It is one of an unusual, and remarkable, nature. The argument on which it is founded is most forcible and conclusive. At the same time it is the most seasonable and appropriate that can be urged. We may thus paraphrase it, "I am now brought as a man to my last extremity. It is said that God disowns me; but it cannot be so. My first moment of existence he tenderly cared for. When I could not even ask for, or think of, his kindness, he bestowed it upon me. If, of his mere good pleasure, he brought me into life at first, he will surely not forsake me when I am departing out of it. In opposition, therefore, to all their taunts, I can and will appeal to himself. Mine enemies declare, O God, that thou hast cast me off—*but thou art he that took me out of the womb.* They affirm that I do not, and need not, trust in thee; but *thou didst make me hope*, (or, *keptest me in safety*, margin,) *when I was upon my mother's breasts.* They insinuate that thou wilt not acknowledge me as thy Son; but *I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly.*"

How closely pressed must our blessed Lord have been, that he should thus fetch his argument from far. A mind intent upon its object brings forward strong and unexpected reasons. None but invincible and fundamental arguments will stand in such a crisis. Yet it is open to an immediate objection, and nothing but the solidity of truth can stand the shock of this ready reply—"Every human being may say the same. What has been done for thee more than is daily accomplished for thousands of infants? Many of these experience even greater providential deliverances." To a mere man, and to weak faith, such a reply is staggering and confounding. The answer is obviously too just and reasonable not to silence and strike us dumb. It requires a scripturally enlightened mind, and a strong confidence, first, in the motives, and secondly in the promises, of the beneficent Creator to stand against it. These motives and promises, too, must be known to be good and gracious, otherwise who can confide in them? Blessed Bible, which communicates to us the otherwise unknown mind and will of the Great Supreme! In thy consoling pages the promise is written, "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb. Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you," Isa. xlvi. 3, 4. Jesus as a human scholar, had read that Scripture. His own Spirit had inspired it. He here shows how well he can remember, and apply, the argument which it furnishes.

What an all-sustaining declaration, "I HAVE MADE, AND I WILL BEAR." It founds a promise, on an indisputable, self-evident fact. "Thou art a living being. God made thee such. If he were willing to make thee, he will not be willing to forsake thee." Such is the argument. It leads us from self to God. His motive in creating was his own glory. The good pleasure of his will brought us into existence. On what simple, but scriptural, and invincible premises, therefore, do we rest our supplications in that beautiful prayer, "O merciful God, that hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, have mercy." How astonishing, and reviving, to find that our Lord employs the same argument with his heavenly Father. He goes back to the helplessness of infancy. He seems, as it were, to concede the point to his opposers. "I am," he admits, "hanging on this cross in all helplessness. I appear not to have any power to deliver myself, or any interest with God to do so for me. But I once hung in as helpless a condition. When an infant on my mother's breast, when carried into Egypt, an unseen arm protected me; and as I saw it not, nor consciously felt it then, so will I believe it still upholds me, though I see it not, nor feel it now."

The force, rather the benefit, of this argument, as of every other, lies in its use and application. The promises are made to faith; that is, given to be believed, and urged, and made use of. A promissory note gives neither food nor raiment while it lies in the desk only as a written document; but when it is regarded as good as gold, and is applied to use, its value instantly appears; its benefits are enjoyed. God's promises, and first acts, of care and kindness, ought all to be thus turned to good account. He desires they should. It is our sin, our source of weakness and temptations, that we do not. See how it is employed in Scripture to comfort and sustain the soul, Jer. i. 5; Gal. i. 15; Isa. xlix. 1; Psa. lxxi. 6; Psa. cxxxix. 15.

What a blessed refuge to the creature, to be allowed to go back upon its Creator. How good for the soul to be driven from one experience to another; to be brought down to the babyhood of being, that, finding utter nothingness, it may be forced at last to cast itself entirely upon God! Fallen man naturally regards God only as the last resource, when he can do nothing better. As leaving him, was the first evil committed, so returning to him is the last thing attended to. "My people have committed two evils," (first) "they have forsaken ME, the fountain of living waters;" and (secondly) "they have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jeremiah ii. 13. The disappointed hewer, sighing over his broken cistern, thinks only of making another. That he ought to return to the full fountain, does not so readily occur to his mind, as that he must be more careful to construct another that will not so easily break. This figuratively, but truly, represents the conduct of all unrenewed men. When one child dies, they console themselves that others remain. When friends depart, they retain the hope that they shall acquire more. When one object of delight satiates, they endeavour to invent another, and often fly the whole round of pleasure in pursuit of that contented satisfaction which shall have nothing farther to desire. This they never find: yet onward they haste, and never think of the well-spring of peace and joy. Nor will they. Till the Spirit of the Lord instruct them, and lead them to the Most High, none at all will regard him. Alas! even in those who have been born again of that great Quickener, how much more proneness is there to the way of nature, than to that of grace! If our trials increase, how much more ready are we to seek the consolations of our fellow Christians than of God himself! Whenever our prayers fail to yield us relief, we are more anxious to obtain the kind supplications of a friend, than the intercession of the appointed Advocate above! We wish to abound with comfort and peace, and oftener seek them from our own pleasant frames, and past experiences, than from the undeceiving and infallible assurance of God's promise. When closely pressed with temptations to melancholy, when doubts and despondency prevail, how prone are we to grope in the dark chambers of our own hearts, searching for evidences, the existence, nature, and uses of which, nothing but the light of God's Spirit can enable us to discern. What an increase of evil arises! We become more confused, perplexed, and miserable. Hence we make great mistakes, we put darkness for light, and light for darkness. We fall into a spiritual hypochondriasis, which leads us to regard every thing as against us. We find a good evidence, and imagine it to be bad. We examine a symptom of our spiritual decay, and conceive it to be worse than it really is. We meet with one of an indifferent nature, and persuade ourselves that it is of the most unfavourable kind. Too often we go on, till we sink down into a settled fear, and dulness of spirit, darkness, and despair. How foolish, how sinful is this conduct! It grieves the Holy Spirit. It assumes that God refuses to give us light, or to impart comfort to our souls. It dishonours him. It seems to say, either "I need not," or, "I will not, go to God himself; since these fail me, all is lost." After continuing for weeks, or months, or even years, in this condition, we are at last brought to say, "I must, after all, trust the bare promise. It is only getting worse and worse with me. I will cast myself on God as I am, and if I perish, I perish." When thus the Spirit of God has enabled us to do that very thing, which a child ought to have done long before, which ought to be the first, the spontaneous, impulse of its heart, we find an all-sustaining help. God hears the appeal. He honours that confidence which honours him. He takes off the heavy burden. He relieves the sorrowful heart. He pours balm into the wounded spirit. And if the poor desponder had come to him at first, he should have found the fountain as full, as open, as living, as now. Learn, then, O Christian, to make the Lord your confidence in the first place, not in the last. Begin, and continue, as well as end, all things in him. Always draw near to God as you are. Never wait in hopes to be something shortly which you are not now. Delay is dangerous. Satan will take advantage of it. The longer the heart has to cool, the colder it becomes. As a piece of iron in the hand of the workman, so is the Christian in the hand of God. Instantly as it is removed from the fire, the chilling atmosphere around steals its heat insensibly away. It soon loses its glowing whiteness, becomes covered with darkish spots, and at last returns to its native blackness. From being susceptible of impression, and taking the mould of every stroke, it becomes harder and harder, and the next blow will break it to pieces, or it must be thrust into the furnace again.

Oh compel not your Maker to deal thus severely with you. He desires it not. Instead of retreating into self, before the temptations of Satan, or of men, do as your Lord here sets you an example. Make a direct appeal to God himself. Though racked in feeling, as on a mental cross, hanging by spikes of perplexity, cast yourself on God at once as you are. This is what Jesus does in these verses. He does not give way to despondency or unbelief. The moment a temptation assails him, he carries it to God. Here he allows himself to be reduced, as it were, to the last extremity—to the lowest point of creature-weakness—and then places himself in the Almighty hand. As if man had proved the case against him, he leaves that great Friend to answer the charge who had sustained him till now. Nay, as it were, he throws a necessity upon God, and makes it appear as though he were personally concerned, and bound to answer these taunting men. As if he would say, "Thou didst bring me into this being, thou wilt help me to sustain it."

This argument must prevail. It is founded on what God himself has done. It places him in the position of one who allows his work to be spoiled. It supposes that the same motive which induced him to commence, will lead him to complete. It is argumentum ad Deum; it is an argument which involves the Creator in a matter of duty and interest. It is heavenly logic. The Great Teacher invented it. Every one must enter the school of Christ who desires to learn how to employ it. Turn to the sermon on the Mount: hear how he exhorts the disciples to take no anxious thought for the sustenance of their life, or for the covering of their body. What is the argument he employs? It is included in this simple question, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Matt. vi. 25. Yet how much is contained in that one question! With what force does it urge us to trust all to God! He gave us the great, and will he withhold the small? He supplied life, and will he deny food? He provided the body, and will he grudge it a covering? How adapted is such a mode of reasoning to our condition! What we see, and hear, and feel, to be realities in the world around us, are made the proofs and arguments of an invisible love and care.

We are thus taught to read God's thoughts in his works. Every fowl of the air, every lily of the field, is a witness for the Creator, to confound the distrustful heart of man. The very hair on our head, and the measure of our stature, are made to proclaim not only the futility of our anxiety, but also the minuteness and exactness of the care of God. Those witnesses, too, are daily testifying; these proofs are hourly at hand; nay, they are part of ourselves. Our perishing flesh gives the lie to our doubts and fears. If all inanimate nature could speak, it would say, "Trust the all-wise Ruler." "But," rejoins the desponding Christian, "the immaculate Redeemer may well use such an argument; he may appeal from his birth, from his life, from every thing he pleases, and gain success in all. But my very birth ushered me into the pollution of my nature; I have forfeited my life; my body is corrupt through sin. How, then, can I build any argument upon them? The very birds and flowers, the animate and inanimate creation, are better in this respect than I am; they are free from that sin by which I am overwhelmed." Thy words are true, O disconsolate, but the reasoning proceeds on premises that are false. In thus speaking, thou forgettest two things; first, that Christ has taken thy place, and pseaks in thy name; and, secondly, that thou must put thyself on the merits of Christ's righteousness, and present every plea and prayer in his name. This is the Gospel exchange, of which, in the time of temptation, too many lose sight. To this, however, all must come for peace and strength; whether sooner or later, there is the same necessity. To trust in Christ's suretyship, and build all our arguments on his righteousness, is the only source of relief and comfort to the burdened heart. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you." If the wearied soul come instantly, it finds rest. If it labour on for many years, and imagine itself not yet weary enough, or heavy laden enough, to come to the Saviour, or to be accepted of him, it must come to him at last, for no where else can it find rest. How much better, then, to come at once, and as the sinner is, than to carry so long the heavy burden on his own shoulders. This is a "voluntary humility" which is displeasing to God. How much more like an obedient child, to comply the instant we are enjoined, than to delay long before we submit! Under the appearance of being too afraid of self, it exhibits a degree of ignorance and self-will, which is most dangerous and sinful. Let us learn to receive the kingdom of heaven like a little child. As an infant receives that once doubtful inheritance, which its surety has secured for it, and lives and grows up, in the enjoyment of all its privileges, without ever attempting to cancel the guardian's deed, so must we. Without asking our consent or advice, a Trustee was appointed by our heavenly Father to manage our concerns; he occupied his whole time, and spent his life, to set them right; he conducted them to a successful issue, and calls on us to enter into the enjoyment of them. Receive the kingdom of God at the hand of your spiritual Surety, as a child receives an earthly estate at the hands of a temporal trustee; do not cancel his act; do not frustrate his work; grieve not his Spirit. It is true you are a sinner, but your Surety's blood has removed all guilt from between you and your heavenly Father. It is true you have no right to any thing in yourself, but Christ makes over his right to you. It is true you can lay no claim to any thing, but Christ prefers one for you. Your life was forfeited, but Christ has paid the penalty; and your present existence is a loan for which you are indebted to the death of Christ. Your body is indeed corrupted, but there is a time coming, when, if you believe in him, Christ will "change your vile body and make it like unto his own glorious body."

Pray, then, to the Spirit of Light to enable you to perceive the meaning, and to feel the power, of this Gospel exchange. It is one, remember, which has been already made on Christ's part; he never consulted you before he took your nature, and died in your stead. But on your part, also, this exchange must be made, as well as on that of Christ. As he took your nature voluntarily, so must you accept his suretyship; you must renounce all your own grounds of confidence, and place your whole trust on the merit of what he has done and suffered.

But the disconsolate may add, "I cannot, like Christ, say 'My God;' he had a right to use this language. I have none!" We answer, True, you have no right in yourself, and what is more, you never can have. A sinful creature can have no inherent right to call God by this endearing and connecting name. And if we must not trust in God till we possess this right, then are we undone. No human being, consequently, dare address the Most High by any other titles than those of Creator and Judge. Yet even here, you possess a right, and are bound to say, my Creator and my Judge. God stands connected with you in these indissoluble relations. He is your Creator, and if you do not trust in him as such, he will be your Judge to condemn you. But consciousness of sin makes us afraid of God. We know that as our Creator, we have violated his laws, and therefore the consideration of this relation to him, with remembrance of our sin, must tend to widen the moral distance which already exists. But, blessed be the Father of all mercies, our bankrupt name is exchanged for that of Christ; our ruined cause is undertaken by a Surety; our forfeited estate is brought back for us by a heavenly Redeemer. A Trustee is provided to take our name and nature, our debts and penalties, and to make over all his rights and privileges to us. In Christ we can call the Almighty

Creator and Judge OUR GOD and OUR FATHER. In Christ it is our duty to regard God as *ours*. We sin against Christ when we address the Most High in any other manner. We virtually deny our obligation to obey the commandments, when we do not call God *our God*. The beginning, and basis, of both tables of the law is, "I am the Lord thy God." What a blessed necessity is thus laid upon us to regard the Great Creator as our God! What an acceptable knowledge is this which makes us acquainted with ONE whom we can call our own!

Personality of interest in any matter, gives it sure influence over our selfish hearts. We are captivated with the generosity of him, who makes it our first duty to APPROPRIATE his blessings. This one act may be called the beginning, continuance, and end, of a Christian's work. "Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30, and our whole duty in regard to him as such, is that of *appropriation.* "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. xiii. 14; Eph. iv. 24, is the injunction of the inspired volume. "Put ye on," that is, take him as given; use him as made over to you; be wise in his *wisdom;* accepted before God in his *righteousness;* inwardly pure and holy by his *sanctification;* and finally and eternally delivered from all sin and corruption, from Satan, death, and hell, by his *redemption.* This is the glorious privilege to which we are invited; this is the first, last, and constant duty, which the Scriptures enjoin. We are all welcome thus to apply Christ's fulness to our own use. This work of appropriation is an everlasting employment. Till we are able to know the fulness of the freely-gifted Saviour, "which passeth knowledge," we are not at liberty to cease. Let the Christian, then, enter on this duty with alacrity. Let him be as willing, as he is welcome, to be always putting on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness; and daily appropriating something more out of THE ALL-FULNESS. This was what the apostle did continually. He laid hold more and more of the things of Christ, and made them his own. At last he was able to say, "all things are mine." So let every Christian appropriate what Christ freely gives. May the Holy Spirit enable you to do so more and more, till you are able, even when looking back on the feebleness of infancy, or when feeling thy nothingness of nature, and vileness through sin, to cast thyself on the care of an Almighty Creator, and say, through Christ, "Thou art my Father and my God."

THE ENTREATY.

VERSE 11.—*Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.*

PERSEVERING urgency of supplication, proves the existence alike, of severe distress and powerful faith. This entreaty evidences both in the breast of our Lord. Having made a strong appeal to God, he seconds it with this earnest entreaty. There is remarkable force and propriety in its expressions. Every syllable tells. "Be not far, for trouble is near." What a contrast! What an argument! But see what is added, "for there is none to help." What a conclusive statement! What an irresistible appeal!

Here is an extremity of sorrow in which Jesus was placed. Trouble was near indeed. It was in his body, and in his soul. Yet mark what perseverance in prayer. Observe how he never deviates from the one petition. That presence of God which was first sought, he still seeks, and will never rest till he find. Earnest desire after God occupies Christ's whole soul. No suffering of body, no temptation of spirit, ever diverts him from it. His mind is absorbed. His desires are all centred in Him whose "presence is salvation," Psa. xlii. 5, *margin.*

The power of concentration of mind must have been fully possessed by our blessed Lord. As a man, we must regard him to have been of powerful intellect, lively imagination, exalted sentiments, and exquisite feelings. This perfect endowment of faculties, necessarily rendered him susceptible of impression, to a degree altogether inconceivable by men of sinful mould. The conceptions of his mind were clear as light; the pictures of his imagination alive with the realities of both worlds; his sentiments pure as the atmosphere of heaven; his feelings tender as tenderness itself. With such a constitutional temperament, "with an unfathomable susceptibility of anguish," how continually, how sorely must he have suffered in this rough world! He was the "plant of renown," Ezek. xxxiv. 29; the sensitive plant of humanity, recoiling from every touch, and shuddering at every approach of sin, that surrounded him on all sides. With such an intellect, too, whatever object caught his attention, must have obtained a full, undivided, and perfect application of thought. There were no opposite principles at work in his breast. No hesitation of judgment; no debate of choice; no balancing of interests; no calculating of consequences. Perception was immediate; decision instantaneous. His holiness of nature must have rendered every exercise of his mind on earthly things, a source of pain and grief. It is said of Lot that "his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the wicked," 2 Pet. ii. 8. Had this nephew of Abraham not possessed that "righteous soul," these deeds would have proved rather a gratification. It was his righteousness alone that caused him to suffer in seeing and hearing the Sodomites. If this can be said of a stained sinner, how much more of the spotless Saviour? His essentially righteous soul must have been daily grieved with sin, that met him at every turn. Christ could not feel indifferent to any thing. Multitudes pass unscathed through life, panoplied in their indifference. Apathy is a coat of mail which nothing penetrates. But Christ never put it on. His only breastplate was righteousness. The sword of justice could not penetrate it, but the transgressions of men pierced it every hour.

When, then, Christ here says, "trouble is near," we must consider that throughout his entire humanity, he felt first the trouble, and secondly its nearness. His intellect perfectly apprehended its nature. His imagination was alive to its horrors. His sentiments were shocked by its vileness. His feelings lacerated by its nearness. Nor did any thing withdraw his attention. He might look over both worlds, and find no one that could, and would, sympathize in his trouble. He was a solitary in the universe of being. There was a God in heaven, there were men on earth, but there was a God-man nowhere. Christ felt as one left to himself, altogether alone: as one also against whom, at this moment, the whole universe seemed to be turned; therefore he adds, "There is none to help." I look above, around, below, but there is no friend at hand. "I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul," Psa. cxlii. 4. "I am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top," Psa. cii. 7, at which arrows are being aimed from every quarter. The bird uses not her wings to flee, for she sees not the danger. But here is One whom all the archers wound—who knows, who feels the danger, but who refuses to use his own power to free himself. He waits till God shall help him. Therefore he does nothing but pray. Hear how he perseveres in supplication, as other psalms may be understood to represent, "Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low," Psa. cxlii. 6. "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come unto deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty," Psa. lxix. 1.

How wonderful and exemplary, O Christian, is this conduct of our suffering Lord! It proves him to have been more than man! His resignation and meekness under trial, his patience and perseverance in waiting upon the expected help of God, are indeed human virtues, but exhibited in him with superhuman, and Divine, power. He could have proved his own effectual helper. A single request in prayer to his Father, would have brought twelve legions of angels to his deliverance, Matt. xxvi. 53, 54. And what mere man, having such resources at command, would not have availed himself of one, or more, or all, of them, for his help? What mere man could thus leave himself in the hands of his enemies, and only exercise against them the voice of prayer? Jesus on the cross is God incarnate. None but himself could have said, "There is none to help," and yet not make haste to be his own helper. He is hanging in death as our surety sacrifice, and he is praying as the high priest of our profession. Imitate, then, his example, O Christian, however forsaken, and forlorn, thy circumstances may be. Learn that your strength and safety lie in Jehovah. Learn that there are periods in which you can only leave yourself to him, by leaving yourself to your enemies. He that believeth, shall not make haste, Isa. xxviii. 16. He that believeth shall not be ashamed, Rom. x. 11. He that believeth shall not be confounded, 1 Pet. ii. 6. Why? Because he that believes will pray; and to him that prays and believes "NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE," Matt. xvii. 20. How? Because the omnipotence and faithfulness of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are immediately engaged, and expressly covenanted, to aid him, by this promise, "Call upon ME in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Psa. l. 15.

THE ASSAULT.

VERSES 12, 13.—*Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.*

IN these and a few of the following verses, our Lord more particularly specifies the enemies that surrounded him, and the miseries which he endured. He spreads his trouble before the Lord, as if he would arouse the attention of Heaven by the minuteness of detail, and prove the reality of his distress, by enumerating its several and most prominent features.

He begins with his enemies; he compares them to "bulls," to "strong bulls of Bashan." In that fertile country, this animal was nurtured to its greatest perfection; there it attained its full power and vigour. The characteristics of various animals have been figuratively applied, in every age and country, to represent those of man. The pen of inspiration has here represented the enemies of our Lord, by the significant emblem of strong bulls. These animals are remarkable for the proud, fierce, and sullen manner, with which they exercise their great strength. Such were the persecutors who now beset our Lord. These were, first, human, and secondly, spiritual foes; and both were alike distinguished by that proud, fierce, and sullen manner in which they assaulted him.

When contemplating the crucifixion of our Saviour, it is difficult to keep at all times before the mind the fact, that spirits of darkness were as really, and as busily, engaged there, as were human beings. Indeed, we must suppose that the latter, before they could reach such a height of malicious cruelty and wickedness, must have been actuated by malevolent spirits; their wickedness was fostered and directed by a power superior to themselves; their pouting lips, their wagging heads, their pointing fingers, and their taunting tongues, were animated by Satanic influence. The spirits of darkness had thus a double advantage in their assaults. Their own attacks could only be directed immediately on the spirit of our Lord. But whenever they desired to bring any particular temptation to bear with all possible force, they would avail themselves of the members of these men's bodies, to give it human utterance, and to assail the outward senses, at the instant they assaulted the inner man. Such was the strait in which our Lord was placed. Many bulls and strong, had beset him round. He feels the helplessness of his condition—he tells it to his God.

Imagine you behold a fellow-creature closely pursued; not only one enraged animal, but a whole herd fall upon him; they trample him under foot; they surround him on every side, and low against him; they strike him with their horns; they toss him to and fro; they rush upon him with one accord. What horror, what fearfulness, what helplessness, are pictured in this condition! Just so was it now with our Lord upon the cross. We may well imagine him to say with the Psalmist, "My heart is sore pained within me; and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away, and be at rest," Psa. lv. 4—6. Great, indeed, was that strait in which our Lord was placed upon the cross. On all sides he was encompassed, from all sides assailed. With persevering impetuosity would the various powers of darkness press our Lord with their different temptations, throwing themselves, as it were, upon his spirit. The trouble was near indeed. Christ was alone. At every instant he had to repel innumerable temptations. This is done by men, as well as by unembodied spirits, by a direct effort of the will. Christ's human soul was incessantly called upon to exercise its holy will in the rejection of these temptations; and it need scarcely be added, that a temptation, whether presented audibly, visibly, or mentally, cannot possibly leave any stain when rejected by the will. Let this be pondered. Many individuals feel averse to think that Christ was directly tempted by Satan, not distinguishing sufficiently the difference between the suggestion, and the reception, of evil. It is important to clear this point. Every person may readily perceive, that no guilt could result from our Lord's hearing a temptation uttered by the mouths of these taunting men. So, likewise, no moral stain could be left, when, without human instrumentality, the wicked spirits darted their suggestions into the Saviour's mind. In the one case, the evil word he heard was rejected, and in the other, the fiery dart he felt was cast off, by the instantaneous activity, and holy energy, of our Saviour's will.

The apostle exhorts us to take the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, Eph. vi. 16. It was this shield that our Lord held fast. Pressed on every side, pinioned in his body, wounded in his soul by that sharpest of all spears, the curse of God, Christ was now placed in the greatest strait that ever any immortal spirit knew. The sons of pride stood round his cross. Well fed and clothed, pampered with all luxury, stout and strong, like bulls from the rich pastures of Bashan, they stood and lowed against their crucifying victim. Relentless and sullen, never once did they show him the remotest pity; fierce and proud, their words and taunts were selected with most bitter and cruel ingenuity; savage in their malice, they left nothing undone which could wound and lacerate his feelings. What these corporeal foes did visibly, and audibly, was an outward picture of what proud, fierce, and sullen spirits were doing inwardly. Wrestling in their great might with the spiritual energy of our Lord, they gave unceasing vent to their malicious insinuations; thrusting themselves close upon his spirit with fierce impetuosity, they endeavoured to obtain an entrance into the inner chambers of his will. Incessant and innumerable were the temptations with which they besieged him; but all in vain. An Almighty and immaculate Will resided in the crucified frame of Jesus of Nazareth.

So wild, impetuous, and furious, was this assault of men and devils, that our Lord adds, "They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion," verse 13. The deceitful couching, the sudden spring, the fearful roar, the tearing power of the lion, give another representation of the enemies of the Redeemer, and of the nature of their assaults. Hear how he speaks of them in the 57th Psalm, 4th verse, "My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." The cunning and treachery of the feline species, may be fitly chosen as emblematic of our Saviour's enemies. The Pharisees and scribes had often laid wait for him; they sent persons to feign themselves just men, who should entangle him in his talk. Now then, that they had laid their paw of power upon their prostrate victim, they were ravening in his blood, and satiating their glaring eyes with the sight of his mangled and quivering body. "In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions," Psa. xxxv. 15—17.

THE FAINTNESS.

VERSE 14.—*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.*

THE most strenuous efforts of the combined Powers of Darkness—the most cruel taunts and sorest torments of men—could make no unholy impression on the spirit of the great Redeemer. His flesh, however, felt the effects of their assaults. His blessed body was exquisitely susceptible of impression. It could suffer, it could languish, it could die.

Our Lord evinces, by the words of this verse, how intensely he feels the weakness of his earthly vessel. What expressive terms convey the knowledge of it to our minds! We can more readily sympathize in the bodily sensations which our Lord experienced, than in the mental and spiritual anguish which he endured.

HE WAS STRETCHED. We know what pains ensue to a limb or a finger, that is kept in one unvarying position, even for a few minutes. Christ had now been stretched for nearly, as some think, six hours.

HE WAS TRANSFIXED WITH NAILS. The most tender parts of his body, the hands and feet, where the nerves of sensation are most numerous, and close together, were pierced with large strong nails. We know what we feel when a thorn, which we can scarcely discern, lodges in our skin.

HE WAS RACKED TO DISLOCATION. When the elevated cross settled into its socket, the jerk must have shaken the crucified person with great violence. A racking jar must have been felt throughout the entire frame. Every muscle would be stretched, and the ligaments of the joints strained. From what we must conceive to have been the previous enfeebled state of our Lord's body, we conclude that its muscular power must have been greatly diminished. It is not improbable but that, with the shock, the ligaments would not only be strained, but also would give way, so that partial or entire dislocation ensued, especially in the wrist, elbow, and shoulder, of each arm. The text informs us that it was so. "All my bones are out of joint." Not one was broken, but most, or all, were dislocated.

HIS BODY WAS BURDENED WITH ITS OWN WEIGHT. Having hung for so many hours, the strain on every part of the frame would increase with every succeeding moment. The gradual elongation of the muscles must necessarily weaken them. Strong spasms, incessant aches, and shooting pangs, would still further incapacitate them for the office of sustaining. The depressed body, dragging thus from the arms, would sink upon itself. It is uncertain whether there were any projecting pin in the centre of the cross, to sustain part of the weight of the body. If there were none, as some think, then the entire weight must have been suspended from the hands. The loins, loosened by intense agony, would be incapable of yielding to the limbs that strength which was necessary to maintain them in an upright position. The knees therefore would be bent forward in utter weakness. The wounds in the hands would consequently be torn, and greatly enlarged. The heel also, and that part of the foot which was above the nail, would be pressed with painful force upon the iron.

HE WAS FAINT. Such a feeling of languor and faintness supervened, that language fails to express it, and the emblem of "water poured out" is employed to represent it. As the water falls from the vessel to the earth, see how its particles separate farther and farther from each other. Its velocity increases as it falls. It has no power to stay itself mid-way, much less to return to its place. It is the very picture of utter weakness. Such was our Lord's experience. The sensations we feel when about to faint away are extremely distressing. We appear to our own consciences to be nothing but weakness—as water poured out: every bone feels relaxed and out of joint; it seems as though we had none; the strength of bone is gone, the knitting of the joints loosened, and the muscular vigour fled. A sickly giddiness overcomes us. We have no power to bear up. All heart is lost. Our strength disappears, like that of wax, of melting wax, which drops upon surrounding objects, and is lost. Daniel thus describes his sensations on beholding the great vision, "There remained no strength in me; for my vigour was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength," Dan. x. 8. In regard, however, to the faintness which our Lord experienced, we ought to notice this additional and remarkable circumstance, that he did not altogether faint away. The relief of insensibility he refused to take. When consciousness ceases, all perception of pain is necessarily and instantly terminated. But our Lord retained his full consciousness throughout this awful scene; and patiently endured for a considerable period those, to us, insupportable sensations, which precede the actual swoon.

Let the afflicted Christian, when sunk alike in health and spirits, and passing, it may be, out of one faint into another, endeavour to think of the Saviour's faintness on the cross. The elder brother can sympathize with us even in such an extremity of feeling. Remember how meekly he bore his own affliction; how tenderly he feels for the most unworthy of his brethren in their distresses. Call to mind that compassionate consideration which he exhibited in the days of his flesh, towards the multitudes that followed him, Matt. ix. 36. Hear how he speaks to his disciples, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way," Matt. xv. 32. Now that he is ascended to the highest heavens, his heart is as full of sympathy as before. Whilst therefore you would desire that he should regard your present trial, direct your own attention in like manner to his former affliction. The sympathy between Jesus, the head, and your soul, as a member of his spiritual body, will thus be consummated. The very lowest depth of your experience, shall find that of Christ beneath it. Sink, then, and fail, as may both heart and flesh, the sympathy of Jesus-God will fail you never. Therefore, let all afflicted Christians attentively, and fully, and unremittingly, "CONSIDER HIM THAT ENDURED," lest they become "wearied, and faint in their minds," Heb. xii. 3. Though faint, let them be still pursuing, under the Captain of their salvation, against all their enemies, Judges viii. 4. Yea, though the outward man perish, there is no cause to faint, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Even though darkness envelope them, let not their hearts despond. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint," Isa. xl. 27—31.

If then, O Christian, thou faintest in the day of adversity, may we not say, "thy strength is small?" Prov. xxiv. 10. Christ is given of God to be our strength. Lay hold on him, and thou shalt be invincible. Pray fervently to the Holy Spirit to inspire thee with the mind that was in Jesus; to impart to thee the same desires and earnest longings which filled his heart. It was not with mere pain, that he was faint. It was not with anxiety to be freed from affliction, that his spirit melted. It was with intense desires after God, with unutterable emotions under his Father's withdrawal, that Christ's heart was poured out like water. We may suppose these to be his words, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," Psa. lxxxiv. 2. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee. My soul followeth hard after thee," Psa. lxiii. 1, 8. This was the "one thing" which Christ desired, which he sought after. Is this also the chief happiness of your heart? Is the enjoyment of God's favour—the return of his presence of light and love—the principal subject of your prayers, the first and last object of your hopes, anxieties, and desires? Then fear not, neither despair. Weep, and mourn, yet do not despond. Sow many prayers, cast forth your supplications, plant your petitions without ceasing, and in due season you shall reap, if you faint not. Gal. vi. 9.

THE EXHAUSTION.

Verse 15.—*My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death*

Though the faintness, mentioned in the preceding verse, never reached its crisis, yet it was followed by complete exhaustion. This was the natural effect of crucifixion. We have remarked that our Lord's body was stretched, was transfixed with nails, was racked to dislocation, was burdened with its own weight, and was oppressed by faintness. We now further observe, that inflammation must have commenced early, and violently, in the wounded parts—have been quickly imparted to those that were strained—and have terminated in a high degree of feverish burning over the whole body. The animal juices would thus be dried up, and the watery particles of the blood absorbed. The skin, parched by the scorching sun till mid-day, would be unable to imbibe, or supply, any moisture. The loss of blood, at the hands and feet, would hasten the desiccation. Hence our Lord says, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." The fever would devour his small remaining strength. And thirst, that most intolerable of all bodily privations, must have been overpowering. His body appeared, to his feeling, like a potsherd that had been charred in the potter's kiln. It seemed to have neither strength, nor substance, left in it. So feeble had he become, so parched and dried up, that clamminess of the mouth, one of the forerunners of immediate dissolution, had already seized him. "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

"For our sakes Christ yielded himself like 'water' without resistance, to the violence of his enemies; suffering his 'bones,' in which consisteth the strength of the frame, to be distended and dislocated upon the cross; while, by reason of the fire from above, to the burning heat of which this paschal lamb was exposed, his heart dissolved and melted away. The intenseness of his passion, drying up all the fluids, brought on a thirst tormenting beyond expression, and at last laid him low in the grave. Never, blessed Lord, was love like unto thy love! Never was sorrow like unto thy sorrow! Thy spouse and body mystical, the Church, is often in a degree conformed unto thee, and as thou wert, so is she in this world."—*Bishop Horne on the Psalms.*

The statement of this verse may be illustrated, by the situation of a soldier expiring on the field of battle.* Of a late excellent officer, and exemplary Christian, it is recorded, that he "lay wounded, naked, bleeding, and helpless, for two days and two nights, exposed to the intense heat of a burning sun, and, what every soldier, whose lot it has been to lie wounded on a field of battle, knows to be more dreadful than any or all circumstances of suffering united together, TO THE WANT OF WATER." He says, "At this dreadful period of pain and destitution, I was lying naked on a bank of scorching sand, fainting from time to time with loss of blood, and, from the severity of my wounds, unable to move, I was assailed with the rage of intolerable thirst. Mere weakness, approaching to insensibility, induced at length a kind of resignation, and even a hope that a few hours would put a period to my sufferings."—*Governor Melvill's Memoirs.*

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* Poole's Synopsis.

Such is the natural, human, feeling, under protracted sufferings. But the grand desire of our Lord, was not their mere termination, but the return of the light of his Father's countenance. However severe were his bodily pains, they appeared to him as nothing in comparison with this, that the consolations of God's presence should be absent from him, when he was on the very point of expiring. He therefore complains of it, sets it forth as an argument, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death;" as if he would say, "And dost thou still leave me, when I sink exhausted under the last enemy?"

Sad and sorrowful condition to which the Saviour of the world was reduced! Grievous, indeed, is sin, when we see what it cost the Saviour! Thy sins, O reader, brought Jesus to this extremity! He endured the agony of a raging thirst, that thou mightest drink of the river of God's pleasure. Go down, then, deep into the fountain of thy heart. Let the wounds of Jesus open all the springs. Bring forth the tears of true contrition and penitence, to satisfy the longing desire of him who thirsts for thy soul's eternal welfare. Be not like the unfeeling potsherds of this world, who strive against their Maker, Isa. xlix. 5. Say not thy sins are few in number, and not aggravated in their nature. One sin thrust Adam out of paradise. Thy one sin, either brought Christ to this cross, or will bring thee to perdition. Repent! Repent! Shall Jesus thirst, and thirst for thee, and wilt thou grudge him a tear? Shall His tongue be powerless, and wilt thou not speak for it, and say, "Sad, sad day in which I sinned! Cursed be the guilt with which I crucified my Saviour!" Fall upon thy knees, and pray, "Lord, make me to weep over myself and thee. Help me to learn the atrocity of my sins, in the severity of thy sorrows." This is both thy duty, and thy privilege, fellow-sinner. Lest angels weep over thy death-bed, weep thou with thy dying Lord. His stripes will heal thee. His wounds will cure thee. His sorrows will comfort thee.

Blest Balm of Gilead! bruised to be our medicine! I feel thy bruises as my own. They are mine, and they are thine; for I inflicted them, and thou didst bear them. Amazing partnership of sin and sorrow! The sin is mine, the sorrow thine. Yet mine thou takest, and thine mine makest. So now thy sorrow's mine, and all my sins are thine. O wonderful exchange of love and grace, with gratitude and sympathy!

THE PIERCING.

VERSE 16.—*For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.*

So varied, and so great, was the malignity exhibited by the enemies of our Lord, that the characteristics of two species of ferocious animals, were not adequate to its representation. Another emblematical figure is therefore introduced. The assembly of the wicked is compared to that of dogs, who haunt about the cities, prowl in every corner, snarl over the carrion, and devour it all with greediness. Like the wild cry of dogs in pursuit, with unfailing scent tracking their victim, vigilance of eye on all its movements, and a determination which nothing can falter, they run it on to death. The oriental mode of hunting, both in ancient and modern times, is murderous and merciless in the extreme. A circle of several miles in circumference is beat round; and the men, driving all before them, and narrowing as they advance, inclose the prey on every side. Having thus made them prisoners, the cruel hunters proceed to slaughter at their own convenience. So did the enemies of our Lord. Long before his crucifixion, it is recorded that they used the most treacherous plans to get him into their power. The scribes and the pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him, Luke xi. 53, 54. And they watched him, and sent forth spies which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him into the power and authority of the governor, Luke xx. 20. Having marked their victim, having chosen their opportunity, having tracked him to his usual resort, the dogs compassed him, the wicked enclosed him. Judas, who "knew the place," "came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves," John xviii. 2, and Matt. xxvi. 47: and they laid hold on him and led him away. "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes, came together, and led him into their council," Luke xxii. 66. "Of a truth, Lord, against thy holy child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together," Acts iv. 27.

Thus was our Lord pursued to death—surrounded on all sides—by wicked hands taken, and crucified, and slain. Like a stag in the midst of the hunters, he saw no way to turn. "The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him," Gen. xlix. 25. That he might not escape, they pierced his hands and his feet. They did not expedite his death. His wounds were in the limbs, not in the vital parts, lest he should too soon be gone. The wicked Lords of the Philistines said, "Call for Samson that he may make us sport," Judges xvi. The cry in Pilate's court was, "Crucify him, crucify him;" not merely "Away with him from the earth," but "Away with him in the most shameful manner, and with the most excruciating torments, that the laws allow." Notwithstanding the infatuated madness of the moment, the Jews remembered that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death. Nor, indeed, would the severest of their own legal punishments have satisfied their malice. They appear glad for once to be under Roman law, that they may insure for their victim a Roman punishment. Herod and Pilate dismissed their enmity, and the hypocritical mob cried out, "We have no king but Cæsar." The expostulations of the relenting governor only incensed their rage. His attempt to deliver himself from the guilt of pronouncing condemnation on the innocent, made them only the more eager to take it upon themselves, "His blood be on us and on our children." Awful legacy of imprecation, which their posterity to this day inherit! The outrageous clamour of the priests and of the people prevailed; the wavering judge gave sentence for the ignominious and cruel execution. On Calvary they had, at last, the satisfaction to behold him, firmly grasped in the lingering death of the Roman cross. Of all sanguinary punishments, that of crucifixion is one of the most dreadful. No vital part is immediately affected by it. The hands and feet, which are furnished with the most numerous and sensitive organs, are perforated with nails, which must necessarily be of some size to suit their intended purpose. The tearing asunder of the tender fibres of the hands and feet, the lacerating of so many nerves, and bursting of so many blood-vessels, must be productive of intense agony. The nerves of the hand and foot, being the terminations of those which occupy the arm and leg; and these being intimately connected with the nerves of the whole body, the laceration of the former must be felt over the entire frame. Witness the melancholy result of even a needless puncture, in any one of these remote parts, that a spasm is not unfrequently produced in the muscles of the face, which locks the jaws inseparably. When, then, the hands and feet of our blessed Lord were transfixed with nails, he must have felt the sharpest pangs shoot through every part of his body. Supported only by his lacerated limbs, and suspended from his pierced hands, our Lord had nearly six hours' torment to endure.

Our Jesus is thus THE PIERCED ONE. He was pierced in his head by the thorns, he was pierced in his back by the scourge, he was pierced in his hands and his feet by the nails, and he was pierced in his side by the spear. This forms one proof that he is the true Messiah. O Jew, reach hither thy finger, and behold his hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into his side, and be not faithless but believing. The promise is sure; the time is approaching, (may it not be far off!) concerning which he has declared, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon ME WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born," Zech. xii. 10. Our New Testament testifies the same truth with the Old Testament which the disciples of Moses venerate. They were written by the same Spirit of inspiration. The light which guided the pen of Zechariah, directed that of John; and because the time of the accomplishment is so much nearer, the latter proclaims, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which PIERCED him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, even so, amen," Rev. i. 7. Oh that multitudes of Jews and Gentiles may be prepared for that day! May the Spirit of life come into the dry bones, and may an exceeding great army be raised up, who, as faithful soldiers of the cross, will not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but will fight manfully under his banner against sin and the world, Satan and the flesh.

Look hither, also, O Christian! The bleeding Saviour is raised up, that whosoever looketh unto him may be healed. As the Israelites of old were saved from instant, and painful dissolution, by turning their weeping eyes to the brazen serpent; so now by the eye of faith, when thou lookest to Jesus exalted on the cross, thou shalt be delivered from spiritual and eternal death. "Look unto ME, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." As it is a spiritual or moral looking, so is it a spiritual or moral salvation. We behold in Christ's body the effects of sin, and we learn to hate it, as the cause of evil to our BEST FRIEND. We see the nails driven through his quivering flesh, and we would fain pluck them out again, and cast them away. But we learn that our sins were the sharpest piercings which our Saviour felt, and we hasten to remove them. As we would turn, with dismay and abhorrence, from the sharp spear, and bloody nails, that pierced the Saviour's body, so should we from our own sins and transgressions. This is the healing of the soul by the wounds of Jesus, when the piercing of his body affects our heart with hatred against sin. It is for this reason that he is named JESUS, for he saves his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21. The safety of heaven is not only secured to them at last, but the salvation of holiness is imparted to them at present. They are saved from the dominion of sin, saved from the practice of sin, and saved from the love of sin. The sight of a crucified and pierced Saviour, accomplishes this great work in their hearts. When the Spirit of Light opens their naturally darkened understanding to apprehend what Christ the Lord has suffered on their behalf; when they thus "look on him whom they have pierced," they begin to mourn indeed, and to be in bitterness, because their best friend should suffer to such a degree, and that their sins should be the cause. A full and generous grief takes possession of their breasts. They feel as if they had a right to weep over one whom they have slain, who loved them. Like Mary, his mother, a sword now pierces through their own soul also, Luke ii. 35, when they think of their torn and pierced Saviour. Every one mourns apart. In the secret of the closet, when no eye sees them, they bitterly mourn over the sins by which they have pierced their Lord. And in proportion as the Spirit of grace and supplication is received, so is the depth of their sorrow, and the bitterness of their lamentation. In this world alone do they weep. The days of their mourning terminate when they behold the Saviour in his glory; therefore they will not now restrain their tears, since God himself is to wipe them away for ever. And though they would gladly rather depart and be with Christ, which is far better, yet do they feel a sacred, unutterable, blessedness, when, lying in thought at his bleeding feet, they water them, as it were, with genuine, grateful tears, from their pierced and broken hearts.

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THE EMACIATION.

VERSE 17.—*I may tell all my bones.*

THE more we consider the character of our Lord and Saviour, the more does this conclusion force itself upon our minds, that his life must have been one entire suffering. A holy being in a sinful world, must have felt as a creature would out of its native element. A wonder as he himself was to men, they must have seemed more strange to him. That they could eat their food—exert their strength—enjoy their pleasures—bask in the sunshine—converse and smile, inhaling the fragrance of their eastern perfumes, and not love, with heart and soul, the God who gave them all, must have appeared to him, as it really is, unnatural and monstrous. To find men intelligent and reasonable; prudent and amiable; diligent and industrious; kind and grateful; on all occasions except one, towards all persons except one; and that occasion, the highest and noblest that could occupy their faculties, and that One the Being who made them by his hand at first, and by a constant exercise of his power, imparted life in every breath they drew, must have made him conclude that he was resident, either in a world of most daring rebels, or in a vast asylum of monomaniacs. With too much truth, it may be said, he was in both. Man possesses noble and generous powers, but he will not render to God the tribute of them all. This wilfulness renders him a rebel—and the universality of its exhibition on this *one* point, constitutes him a monomaniac. Moralists and physicians, viewing man from different points, and in various lights, have come to the same melancholy conclusion. The maxims of the world prudently coincide here with the doctrines of divines; and that no man should trust his brother where self-interest is concerned, is a proverbial adage of undisputed wisdom. Self is the blind and blinding idol. It is the household god, in every man's heart, to which he pays a daily homage. Where, however, self is not brought into action, man can understand clearly, feel tenderly, and act in a noble and generous manner. He seems for once to have come to himself; but soon he relapses, and God, and his fellow-creatures, are again excluded from the charmed circle of his selfish heart.

When Christ beheld the world he wept over it. He loved and pitied the sinners whom he saw, but that love and pity came back to his own heart with a fatal recoil. He looked not only upon the face, but into the heart of men, and knew them better than they knew themselves. If the very best of human beings perceive much in themselves to lament, how much more quickly could Christ detect it in them, and more holily abhor it? Therefore he must have been always sorrowful, and that sorrow preyed upon his frame. When only about thirty years of age, he looked as if he were almost twenty years older. "Thou art not yet fifty years old," was the observation of the Jews; which shows their idea of his age, taken from his face and figure. The prophet foretold this, "Many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him," Isa. lii. 14; liii. 2. Such was the blessed Saviour's personal appearance. He fasted often. He spent whole nights in prayer to God. He wandered about on his own blessed feet. He rested himself for very weariness on the side of a well, and asked for water to drink. He twice fed thousands, but never performed a miracle for self-supply. For several days immediately preceding his crucifixion, he obtained little or no rest. He walked to Jerusalem almost every morning, and returned to Bethany every evening. The day was spent in warning the crowded city; the night was passed in solitude, with prayer to God. Of himself at this time we may regard him as speaking in the words of the Psalmist, "I am gone like the shadow when it declineth. I am tossed up and down as the locust. My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness," Psa. cix. 23, 24. "My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin," Psa. cii. 3—5.

On that ever memorable night in which he was betrayed, no couch welcomed him to repose. He left the upper room of the last supper for the garden of Gethsemane. There the wearied disciples slept while Jesus knelt upon his last bed. But that kneeling was not in rest; it was in unutterable anguish. His very flesh, too, as if equally willing with his groaning spirit, wept forth its blood in sympathy at every pore. In body and soul, Jesus appears to have been quite spent. To strengthen his humanity an angel was sent from heaven. Scarcely had this relief arrived, than the traitor came. Instantly surrounded by the armed band, and violently seized, he was hurried back into the city. From one judgment-seat to another, he was carried, with little or no intermission, during the whole of the night. From Annas he was led to Caiaphas; from Caiaphas he was sent to

Pilate; from Pilate to Herod; and from Herod back to Pilate again. The night, too, was cold. Even the hardy soldiers needed a fire to warm themselves. Peter, too, could welcome its heat, while perhaps his Lord was trembling with the chill of that large hall. As if the victim of human and satanic malice were not yet sufficiently reduced, they must needs beat out his small remaining strength. Man scourged that back on which his sins were laid; and Christ allowed the stripes to fall without a murmur, that by them his people might be healed. From the fifth judgment-seat, he was at last led forth to Calvary and to crucifixion. Like other prisoners, it was necessary that he should carry his own cross. The burden was laid upon his blessed shoulder. His exhausted and emaciated frame could scarcely support its own weight. They observed his feeble tottering step; they marked his sunken eye, his ghastly visage, his bending, trembling, figure. Sad sight! Even the Romans pitied it. Those ruthless soldiers who mocked his dying agonies, commiserated his burdened weakness, dragging his steps along. They stopped the procession. It was the centurion that issued the humane command. They removed the wood, and laying hold on Simon the Cyrenian, compelled him to bear it after Jesus. This is the only act of kindness which his enemies performed for him. And great indeed must have been the Saviour's weakness when he could not bear even this weight; for as the large upright beam was generally left on Golgotha, it was only the cross piece that was usually laid upon the condemned. Somewhat relieved by this exchange, the progress to the mount of crucifixion was easier and more speedy. There for the last time did the Saviour of our souls lie down. The hard wood was his bed, a cross without a covering. The soldiers stretched his limbs and nailed them fast upon it at their utmost length, as it lay upon the ground. Immediately as they raised it his emaciated frame was exposed to view. It is worn to skin and bone. He looks down on it. He surveys his wasted body. He exclaims, "I may tell all my bones." So plainly did the stretching on the cross bring them all to view, that he was able, as it were, to count their number, and tell them one by one. "The skin and flesh were so distended by the posture of the body on the cross, that the bones, as through a thin veil, became visible, and might be counted; and the holy Jesus, forsaken and stripped, naked and bleeding, was a spectacle to heaven and earth."—*Bishop Horne on the Psalms.*

Learn, professing disciple, a never-to-be-forgotten lesson, from thy Lord's emaciated frame. "The zeal of God's house consumed him, it had even eaten him up," Psa. lxix. 9; the flesh was worn off his bones. With love to souls, and earnest desires for the glory of God, he spent his life. As it was a holy, so it was a whole burnt-offering, which he presented to his Father. In mercy to you, the Father accepted it. In mercy to you, the Saviour substituted his body for yours, and his soul in your soul's stead. In mercy to you, the Holy Spirit exhibits to you this crucified Saviour in the glass of the word, and offers all the benefits of his bitter sufferings to your acceptance. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present YOUR bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. Let the love of Christ constrain you to live no longer unto yourselves, but unto him that died for you, and rose again, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Gratitude demands; let gratitude impel. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Indulge not the flesh, but the spirit. Keep your body in subjection. Dwelling in your ceiled houses, and enjoying the abundance of all things which the Lord sends, without a famine, on this favoured land, see that your soul hunger and thirst after righteousness. Alas for professing Christians! Luxury stints their spiritual growth! Sleeping, dressing, and eating, occupy the greater part of those hours which remain from the cares and business of life! Though Jesus had not where to lay his head, yet would he not take your downy pillow from you, but would have you to choose for your soul, the portion of the beloved disciple, to lie in the bosom of his love. And can heavenly desires arise within the loaded, pampered, flesh? Can that mind find communion with God, which grovels after earthly gratifications? Are indolence, and worldliness, and self-pleasing, the means of amassing spiritual and eternal riches? Art thou a soldier of Christ, and dost thou never fight? Is there a race set before thee, and hast thou no desire to win? Hast thou a cross to bear, and dost thou never try its weight? Look here at thy dying Lord. He has worn himself to a shadow in thy service! "He went about continually doing good." Art thou a follower of Christ? Are thy feet treading in his steps? His were up-hill. His whole life was one laborious ascent. Dost thou press after him? The propensity to descend is natural, and like the power of gravitation, secret, constant, and powerful. Dost thou bear up against it? Is there vigour, earnestness, determination, in thy spirit? Art thou full awake? Is Christ's life stirring within thee, enabling thee to spend and to be spent in the best of services? Art thou able to say, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early?" Isa. xxvi. 9. Are thy prayers cold, formal, heartless, collections of words? or are they earnest, fervent, persevering, accompanied with sighs and tears in secret, and often presented in ejaculations, desires, and waiting expectations? Thy Saviour loves *heart* work. He abhors mere *appearance.* Therefore when he sets thee the example, it is reality: and when he calls thee, even to the severest exercises, for the subjugation of those fleshly lusts which war against the soul, he bids thee anoint thine head, and wash thy face that thou *appear not* unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, who will reward thee openly.

THE INSULTING GAZE.

Verse 17.—*They look and stare upon me.*

Sensitively conscious of his condition upon the cross, the delicate feelings of the holy Saviour were sorely pained by the gaze of the multitude. With impudent face they looked upon him. At their ease they surveyed him. To view him better, they halted as they walked. With deliberate insolence they collected in groups, and made their remarks to each other, on his conduct and appearance. Mocking his quivering, emaciated body, they looked and stared upon him.

How revolting is it to our feelings, to be made the subject of remark, the object of a stare! Pure and innocent minds are the most acutely wounded. The face of guilt is not so easily abashed. Jesus as a man was innocence itself. That lovely modesty, which is a sure ingredient in real worth, was fully possessed by Christ. In the account given of him by Isaiah liii. 3, margin, it is said, "And he hid as it were his face from us." Like the individual who must pass through a place where he is hooted and despised, he turns away his face, and seeks to escape from observation. Nor is such conduct prompted either by cowardice or self-accusation. It is a duty to his own feelings, to save them from such severe and painful trials. So was it with Christ: he ever shrunk back from the contemptuous gaze of the multitude. When he encountered it in their crowded cities, he hid his face against the wall, and hastened out of their streets. But here on the cross, he could look nowhere but their eyes met his. Every one was staring with open eye-lid. His emaciated frame—his convulsive shudders—his spasmodic movements—his naked body—were the subjects of their ridicule, the objects of their insulting gaze.

There is a something in the human eye which gives it peculiar power. It is, at times, as if a spirit, from another world, were looking through it. A glance arrests the attention; a look overawes the mind. We seem to be fascinated. No sooner do we turn our eyes away, than the hated object is again looked at. It is the peculiar prerogative of the wicked to stare the good out of countenance. This may seem but a light affliction, yet it is specially recorded by the Spirit of God, as one of the painful experiences of him, who was tempted in all points like as we are.

To be exposed to the gaze of the soldiers, the judges, the noble citizens, and the vulgar multitude, was a peculiar, and almost daily, trial of the early Christians. Indeed, in every age, those who live as strangers and pilgrims must be objects of remark. As a foreigner in his native costume is annoyed in our streets by the rude gaze of the populace; so the Christian is a foreigner; his speech betrayeth him to be a man of "another country," and as he passes along the walk of life, he is looked at with inquiring astonishment, "Who can this be that differs from us? What is he that presumes to think and act on principles opposed to ours?" He is therefore stared at, first as a wonder, and next as an object of contempt. And the humble, modest Christian, who desires to slip through the world unnoticed, finds himself set forth as a gazing stock, Heb. x. 35. The bitterness of his wounded feelings obtains no relief, till the Spirit the Comforter bring to his remembrance what his Lord endured, and enables him to count it a privilege to be thus admitted to the fellowship of his Master's sufferings.

Meditate frequently, O Christian, on the various trials by which your Master was exercised. Contemplate them with minute attention. Select first one, and then another, of his peculiar sorrows, till each of them successively obtains full consideration. A little sharp experience in thine own person will forward thy progress materially in this learning. When thou art brought to say, "My heart is wounded within me,"—"my soul is exceedingly filled with scorning and contempt,"—"The proud have had me greatly in derision," thou shalt be able to enter more fully into communion with a despised and derided Master. Regard, then, your severest trials as important lessons. Count it a high privilege to be admitted into the sacred sanctuary of the Saviour's sympathy. Be often there. Sit in the silence of heart-felt grief at the feet of "The Man of Sorrows." Set his wounds and thine own sins fully before thee. Meditate on all thou learnest by the Scriptures he endured for thee. Let thine imagination picture, as vividly as it may, the "unknown sorrows and sufferings felt by him, but not distinctly known by thee,"* till with increased gratitude, and inflamed affections thou dost "feel the strong attractive power lifting thy soul above," and thou art able to say from the heart:—

JESUS, I my cross have taken,
  All to leave and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
  Thou from hence my all shalt be:
Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
  All I've sought, or hop'd, or known;
Yet how rich is my condition,
  God and heaven are still my own.

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* Litany of the Greek Church.

Let the world despise and leave me;
They have left my Saviour too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me;
Thou art not, like them, untrue;
And whilst thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love and might,
Foes may hate, and friends may scorn me,
Show thy face, and all is bright.

Go then, earthly fame and treasure,
Come disaster, scorn, and pain,
In thy service, pain is pleasure,
With thy favour, loss is gain.
I have called thee Abba, Father;
I have set my heart on thee;
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,
All must work for good to me.

Man may trouble and distress me,
'Twill but drive me to thy breast:
Life with trials hard may press me,
Heav'n will bring me sweeter rest.
Oh! 'tis not in grief to harm me,
While thy love is left to me;
Oh! 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy unmix'd with thee.

Soul, then, know thy full salvation;
Rise o'er sin, and fear, and care;
Joy to find in ev'ry station
Something still to do, or bear.
Think what Spirit dwells within thee,
Think what Father's smiles are thine,
Think that Jesus died to save thee,
Child of heaven, canst thou repine?

Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Arm'd by faith, and wing'd by prayer,
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise

THE PARTITION OF THE GARMENTS,

AND

CASTING OF THE LOT.

VERSE 18.—*They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*

THE exact, and minute, fulfilment of the words of Scripture, prove them to have been written by none other than the hand of God. Not one word falleth to the ground. Turning to the Gospel of John, chap. xix., how literally is the prophecy of this verse fulfilled! With what emphasis does the apostle add, "These things, *therefore*, the soldiers did!" "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did," John xix. 23, 24.

The raiment with which our blessed Lord was clothed, and the coat, rather the tunic, the garment worn next the skin, corresponding to the shirt of the present times, were thus seized. He was stripped of all. The cruel mockers exposed him naked to his enemies. All crucified persons were treated in this ignominious manner. And we may readily conclude that not a single indignity would be spared that could cast contempt and shame, on him who was regarded as worse than the vilest of malefactors.—See *Calmet*, *Cross*.

These words of John narrate the occupation of the soldiers. When the three crosses were firmly erected in their sockets, the active duty of the several executioners terminated, and "sitting down they watched them there." Each now was eager to obtain the usual perquisite of office, the clothing of the condemned. The miserable thieves perhaps had little to leave. Nothing is said regarding them. But our blessed Lord had been appre. hended in his usual apparel. The soldiers now seize upon it. He allows them to do so. There are four soldiers. They make four parts, and divide to every soldier a part. The tunic is not included in this division. It is kept by itself, for "the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout." This is recorded as if it were not a very common garment. Neither was it. The soldiers therefore envied its possession. They each desired to obtain it. This covetous disposition was overruled by Providence. That God who causeth even the wrath of man to praise him, is able to make all his other passions to subserve his high purposes. This apparently insignificant action, becomes a strong argument for the truth of Scripture to the end of time.

That well-wrought vesture was doubtless an acceptable garment to the Lord. He would not have it torn. Its seamless unity had wrapped his spotless body. It was well suited to One who, like itself, was a perfect whole. It was not of many colours like that of Joseph —a gaudy assemblage of many hues and patches. It hung upon our Lord, as the church ought ever, a seamless thing of one uniform shade. Perhaps it was the cherished gift of some pious disciple. Tradition says it was his mother's present. Such works were peculiar to women in those times. Their book then was the loom:

their pencil the needle. Christianity raises woman in the scale of being, and invites her to sit at the Master's feet equally with man. And woman's heart is grateful. The house of God witnesses to her piety, more frequently than to that of man. The associations of benevolence prosper through her instrumentality. She both occupies, and adorns, that position to which the religion of Jesus has called her. Gratefully attached as we behold her to the cause of Christ, now that he is in heaven, woman was equally so to his person when on earth. This seamless tunic had been wrought by some fair and skilful hand. The receiver of a robe of righteousness, might well return the present of a seamless garment! Fit emblem of grace and gratitude!

What a picture of a sinner's surety did Jesus on the cross of Calvary present! Not a shade, not a stroke was wanting! It was a perfect picture—a complete personification of the curse! The crown of thorns was round his brow; it formed his emblematic title, "KING OF THE CURSE!" His blessed body was exposed to view. Our first parents hid their nakedness amongst the trees of the garden; but Jesus hung exposed upon a tree, and suffered the SHAME OF THE CURSE. His hands and feet were nailed to the wood, he was transfixed immovably by the POWER OF THE CURSE. Opprobrious taunts and dreadful imprecations were heaped upon his head; he tasted the BITTERNESS OF THE CURSE. The light of his Father's countenance was withdrawn from him, and he endured the HORRORS OF THE CURSE. Behold this double picture—the transparent representation of the *Curse* and the *Redemption!* Gaze upon it with awe and love, with gratitude and veneration! Christ is dying under your curse, and yet scattering blessings round him! O take them! Receive the gracious exchange! Exclaim with the apostle, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13; and gratefully exult with the prophet, and say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," Isa. lxi. 10.

The apparently trifling act, of casting the lot for this vesture of our Lord, is most significant. It contains a double lesson. It teaches us how greatly that seamless shirt was valued; how little he to whom it had belonged. It seemed to say, This garment is more valuable than its owner. As it was said of the thirty pieces of silver, "a goodly price at which I was prized at of them;" so may we say regarding the casting of the lot, "How cheaply Christ was held!" The casting of the lot is at all times a solemn matter. It is man's appeal to something above and beyond his own judgment and his own will; he postpones the decision of reason; he suspends the determination of his own judgment; he divests himself, for a time, of that which constitutes him a rational and intelligent being; he ceases to act as a man, and stands forth as a creature of perplexity, that looks to some other power, or being, to decide for him. Who is that being? what is that power? Those who use the lot alone can tell. The pious Jews of old who had recourse to it by Divine command, answer, "It is the Lord." "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord," Prov. xvi. 33. Therefore Saul said unto the Lord God of Israel, "Give a perfect lot," and Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped, 1 Sam. xiv. 41. The holy apostles of the ascended Saviour answer, "It is the Lord." "And they prayed and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon

Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles," Acts i. 24—26. The perplexed Christian answers, "It is the Lord." "I pray earnestly for his direction, and I abide satisfied with his decision." But the worldly man, when using the lot, positively refuses to give this reply. On important occasions, where his interests are at stake, he prudently repudiates the lot; but where matters are nearly on a balance, or where trifles, or amusements only, are concerned, he feels no hesitation to employ the lot, because the results are unimportant. Inquire of him, "What is it that decides? what intelligence acts when you lay aside your own?" Whatever reply he may make in an affirmative form, this we may expect to hear in the negative, "It is not the Lord; I had no reference whatever to the Supreme Being when thus engaged." So decided are multitudes in this opinion, that they deem it a profanity to entertain the idea that God can be concerned in such a matter, but at the same time they admit that there must be something which settles the point; some power, or some nonentity of power, which conducts the uncertainty to certainty. To this they give the name of CHANCE. Of all words in human language that mean nothing, this is the most significant—the most emphatically *nothing*. The Scriptures repudiate it; moralists, philosophers, all thinking men, disown it. Chance is not reckoned a material thing, and if it belong to the spiritual world, in which class is it to be ranked? Judgment has been already given, that it is not the Lord; therefore, neither can it be any of the angelic powers, for they are all his servants, and engage in no work but at his bidding. It must, therefore, be counted amongst the spirits of evil, and consequently to be dreaded rather than courted. Chance is, indeed, but another name for Satan: and it makes one shudder to think, that in the casting of their lots, the throwing of their dice, and the shuffling of their cards, men abandon their own reason, and submit to be guided from uncertainty, to certainty, from the unknown commencement of their game to its definite conclusion, by the great enemy of their souls. Therefore, let all Christians abominate these practices; let them cast the evil instruments of such games out of their houses. If they be so ignorant as not to know how to spend their time to better purpose, let them occupy their hands in works of charity, or peruse the writings of wisdom, or engage each other in edifying conversation. They bear sad testimony against themselves, when they reply that if they leave off these amusements, they shall fall into something worse. Unhappy inhabitants of the earth! Is necessity laid on you to pass only from one evil to another? Are you doomed to no other motion than that which is retrograde?

God's order is that of progress and advancement; his word enjoins us to rise from one degree of usefulness to another. It is our privilege, as it is our duty, to abound in good works; to redeem the time because the days are evil; and "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God." The whole universe of obedient beings, are going forward with their glorious Head. The path of eternity opens before them with new objects, and renewed powers, of light, beneficence, and love. The descending scale is trodden only by the disobedient. They sink deeper and deeper into everlasting darkness; and the moral distance between them and the children of light is eternally increasing. Covet, then, earnestly the best, the most useful life. Let a heavenly ambition animate your breast. Seek for glory and honour, as well as immortality, Rom. ii. 7. Refuse the fleeting pleasure of an hour, the favour of a worldly company, for the joys that never fade, and the approbation of the King of heaven.

Though the lot be thus abused in heathen and Christian countries, yet we must remember that its right and proper use has obtained the sanction of the God of truth. When, therefore, it is employed by the true Christian in a spirit of faith, and when circumstances absolutely require it, he may assure his conscience that he is not out of the path of duty. But he must also bear in mind, how difficult it is to determine the times and seasons. We are all apt to be misled by secret motives and partialities. Instead of a choice entirely free, there is too generally a leaning towards one side. The majority of Christians, therefore, will find the use of the lot, rather a snare, than a help, to them, in their progress through life. Almost unconsciously to ourselves, we may be desiring to have recourse to the lot only to escape our proper responsibility. This is a dangerous state of mind. It directly tempts the Most High. He discerns the lurking thought, and will not sanction it with his blessing. He has given us Reason as a monitor, the Word of Truth as a lamp, and has promised the Holy Spirit to be our teacher and guide. Why, then, should we close our ear to unerring instruction? It may be permitted to those who are "strong in faith," and perplexed in extremity of contradicting circumstances, to have recourse with humble earnest prayer to the lot, as their only remaining door of deliverance from difficulty and dilemma; but Scriptures furnishes a safer, and a better, rule; and accompanies it with a gracious promise from the Lord, when it gives this injunction, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Prov. iii. 6.

THE IMPORTUNITY.

VERSES 19—21.—*But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword: my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth; for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.* Or, *Save me from the lion's mouth, and from the horns of the unicorns.*

THE intensity of the Saviour's anguish, and earnestness of his spirit, in the garden of Gethsemane, are as strikingly denoted by his actions as by his words. A strong and overpowering agitation is evident in every movement. He came and went between God and his disciples; his prayers were intensely brief; they were offered at intervals; they were thrice repeated; he besought his chosen friends, saying, "Watch with me;" he retired; he prayed; he rose from his knees in the unutterable fulness of his sorrow; he came to his sleeping disciples; he exclaimed, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" Matt. xxvi. 40; he returned again to the throne of grace; he cast himself upon the ground; his burdened, almost bursting heart, could only say the same words as before—grief had dried up the streams of thought, the flow of words, into one only channel; but even that he did not stay to use. His spirit was disquieted; he had no rest; again he rose from prayer; again he returned to his disciples—still no sympathy, they were all asleep; to them also he spake nearly in the same terms; they wist not what to say—silence was the only answer he obtained from God and men. "And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words," Matt. xxvi. 44. His agony increased; a bloody sweat burst from every pore; great drops fell to the ground. He prayed more earnestly, yet still used the same words; probably he now ejaculated some of them more than once, and accompanied each burdened word with intervals of heavy groaning, many tears, and strong cries, Heb. v. 7. His perseverance and importunity prevailed; an angel from heaven appeared to him; he felt strengthened with an assurance that his petition was heard; he rose from prayer calm and self-possessed; the agitation was gone; he could now approach his disciples, and compassionately say, "Sleep on now, and take your rest."

While hanging on the cross on Calvary, our Lord obtained deliverance, in like manner, by the power of prayer. Though forsaken, he did not cease to claim affiance with an absent Father; though all was dark and silent, yet he still cried, and prayed, and interceded. As he bowed submissively in the garden, so did he justify God upon the cross; "Thou turnest from me; thou art silent, but thou art holy," was his immediate acknowledgment. When sore beset by spiritual foes, when his attention was, as it were, distracted by the malice of men, he returned instantly again to supplication. When obliged to listen to their taunts, when cut to the heart by their reproach, that God would not acknowledge him, he became only more earnest in his appeal, more determined in his grasp of faith, and said, "But thou *art* my God from my mother's belly." When exquisitely tormented by the aching, quivering, pierced, flesh, he turned away from the wicked instruments, and recognized the hand of his Father in it all, saying, "THOU hast brought me into the dust of death." Yet this, instead of driving him further in heart from God, made him press more intensely in spirit towards him. As it were, with a holy violence of importunity, that would take no denial, he cried as in these verses, "Be not Thou far from me, O Lord; O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth, and from the horns of the unicorns."

In this powerful and importunate appeal to his Father, it is remarkable to observe in what new forms our Lord presents his former petitions. Necessity invents arguments, and renders the dumb eloquent. "Though we cannot answer God's logic, yet, with the woman of Samaria, we hope to prevail with the rhetoric of importunity."* Our blessed Saviour still earnestly desired that same blessing of his Father's presence, for which he had been pleading from the commencement of this psalm. His heart was fully set in him to seek after this; therefore, he never wearied or grew faint. He is at no loss for words, appellations, or arguments. In the compass of three short verses, he not only repeats the substance of all that he had said before, in reference to himself, his enemies, and his Father, but he redoubles appellatives to each, and interjects cogent and powerful appeals for deliverance. He addresses his Father by two new names, "O Lord," and "O my strength;" he prays for himself under two new terms, "my soul," and "my darling." His enemies, whom he had before compared to the bull, the dog, and the lion, he now further sets forth under two new images, "the sword," and "the horns of the unicorns." At the same time, he throws the whole earnestness of his soul into the four accompanying brief, but rapid, urgent, and vehement entreaties: "Be not far from me—haste to help me—deliver my soul—save me." This is the strong crying by which our Lord, as it were, lays hold of, and casts himself upon, the heart of his

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* Bacon's Christian Paradoxes.

Father. He calls him "Lord," or Jehovah, the self-existent being, who is, what he is, in and of himself, altogether independent of the created universe, Exod. iii. 14. It is as if he would say, "I am changed as a man; my circumstances, my feelings, are different to what they ever were before; I am dying; but thou art the living Lord, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. I will, therefore, forget myself and my sad circumstances in thinking of thee, O unchangeable Jehovah." Having thus stated what his Father is in himself, he next fastens his faith on an appropriate point in that relationship which subsisted between them, and calls him "My strength." Christ possessed almighty power in his own person, but for our sakes he refused to use it. He lived not upon himself, but upon his God. His own resources he would not employ, but rather those of his Father, that to him might redound all the glory. His own power he exhibited in prayer, but his Father's power in performance. At his apprehension, when comforting the hearts of his disciples, he might with truth have said, "Think ye that I cannot now command the angels to destroy this multitude?" But Jesus never sought his own glory; therefore his words were, "Think ye that I cannot now *pray to my Father*, and *he will give me* more than twelve legions of angels?" Here, likewise, in his last importunate cry, our Lord appeals to his Father as *his strength;* as one without whom he could and would do nothing; as one who must do all for him, or he must remain as he is.

Secondly, Our Lord's description of himself is twofold, and in nearly synonymous terms, "my soul," and "my darling." This latter term is employed also in another psalm to denote the soul, "Rescue my soul from their destructions: my darling from the lions," Psa. xxxv. 17. Restoration of the soul to spiritual life and joy in the favour and presence of God, and not the life of the body, or its preservation from suffering and death, is the great subject of our Lord's petitions. He thus teaches us to set our hearts on that only which is of chief importance. He shows us where importunity shall neither be unwarranted nor unavailing. The soul is the great object of concern; it is the darling; the pearl of inestimable worth. If this be lost, all is lost. Therefore Christ, by the hand of faith, deposits his most precious human soul in his Father's care. He is here speaking as the firstling of that "flock," of which he declares that no man can pluck one out of his Father's hand, John x. 29. He places his soul, his darling, his united one, that immaterial and indestructible part of the human nature which he had taken into union with himself, in the care of his Father's omnipotence; and earnestly appeals to him to deliver it.

Thirdly, The images employed to represent our Lord's enemies are "the sword," and "the horned unicorns." Each of these new figures, denotes the *piercing* nature of those sufferings, which he was now enduring. The "sword," may be understood of the "wicked," which are "God's sword," Psa. xvii. 13. But we may also consider it as denoting "the curse." The powerful word of the Almighty is represented in Scripture under the figure of a "sword;" see Eph. vi. 17; Matt. x. 34; Rev. i. 16. The sword of the curse, denounced against every disobedience of the law, had, as it were, been kept in abeyance, and had never fallen on the head of sinful man. That sword had not been drawn from its scabbard. It had slept for four thousand years; but now the Surety of sinners was come; he, on whom the curse should light, was hanging on the tree; therefore, the rousing call is made, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of

Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," Zech. xiii. 7. Christ, the good Shepherd, was now smitten. "He gave his life for the sheep;" but while he resigned his body to death, he deprecated the piercing, separating power of the "*sword*" of the curse upon his soul. The "*horns of the unicorns*." This figure denotes indomitable power and energy; and such is the characteristic of the unicorn, or horned rhinoceros. The terms here used, depict the greatest extremity of danger. Like a man who already felt the horn of the savage animal, who was actually being pierced, who was even now transfixed by its sharp and tearing point, Christ prays for deliverance from the terrible power and nearness of his enemies.

The other appellations given to his persecutors are the "dog," and the "lion." The latter is a well known scriptural emblem of Satan, the great enemy and destroyer of the soul. The occurrence of this figure, throughout this, and other psalms, shows that the roaring lion, against whom we require to watch, was prowling around the cross of Christ, seeking to devour and destroy one who yet effectually resisted him, stedfast in the faith, 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.

The brief but expressive petitions which our Lord employs, are extremely importunate. The first unbosoms the uppermost desire of his soul, "Be not far from me." God's presence constitutes the deliverance which he desires: this is the only species of relief and comfort which he will accept; therefore, he presses that it may be no longer delayed, "Haste to help me." He urges his Father with earnestness; he feels that the time is come for the dismissal of his spirit; he cannot bear the thought of breathing it out under desertion—in darkness and distress; he therefore cries, "deliver my soul;" and to express still further the extremity of misery, and, as it were, danger in which he was placed, he represents the jaws of the devourer, as already opened for his instant destruction, and cries, " Save me from the lion's mouth."

Having thus considered the importunity of our great High Priest, when he " offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7, let us improve the subject, Christian readers, to our own practical and spiritual benefit. Let us inquire, first, whether; secondly, on what grounds; and thirdly, to what extent, guilty creatures like us may use urgency in prayer before the great God.

First, *Is it allowable?* To this we must answer in the affirmative. Sinful and fallen as we are, the word of God fully warrants us to speak to him in prayer, not only in the most unreserved, but also in the most importunate, manner. For it is commanded, our Saviour encourages it, Scripture furnishes examples, and its absence is complained of.

First, it is commanded. " Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest," Isa. lxii. 6, 7. " Put me in remembrance; let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified," Isa. lxiii. 26. " Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," Isa. i. 18. " Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace," Heb. iv. 16.

Secondly, our Saviour encouraged it. " The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," Matt. xi. 12. " Strive, (agonize,) to enter in at the strait gate," Luke xiii. 24. " Ask, and seek, and knock," Matt. vii. 7. He spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; that parable was concerning a widow, who by continual coming wearied an unjust judge to decide her cause, Luke xviii. 1. And on another occasion, when expressly teaching his disciples to pray, he employed the similitude of one friend begging a loan of bread from another at the unseasonable hour of midnight, and argues thus, "I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth;" and then practically applying it to the subject of his instruction, he added, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," Luke xi. 1—13. All exhortations to importunity are accompanied by most gracious encouragements. "Let us reason together; your sins shall be as white as snow," Isa. i. 18. "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions: put me in remembrance; let us plead together," Isa. xliii. 25, 26. Even the saddest of all announcements, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear," is immediately preceded by a most seasonable and encouraging statement, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear;" and even though the sins and the evil condition of the people are fully stated in that chapter, yet it is added that "the Lord wondered that there was no intercessor," Isa lix. 1, 2, 16.

Thirdly, Scripture furnishes examples. James assures us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" and yet at the same time informs us that "the righteous man" whom he instances, "was subject to like passions as we are." "Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not for three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain," James v. 16, 18. The patriarchs were remarkable for their power and fervency in prayer. Abraham entreated the Lord for Sodom, till he trembled at his own importunity. Had he only persevered in his intercession to the very last, the cities might have been spared for a little longer; for the Lord patiently heard, granted every petition as it was offered, and departed not till Abraham intimated that he should ask no more, Gen. xviii. 32, 33.

Jacob was honoured of God with the new and honourable name of Israel, because he wrestled in prayer, till he prevailed. Though the angel said, "Let me go," in the vehemency of his spirit he replied, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," Gen. xxxii. 24.

Moses interceded with great urgency, for the children of Israel. He was alone in the mount with God, and beheld the divine wrath, ready to break forth. Though commanded to go down; though a promise was given to make of him a greater and mightier nation: yet he continued pleading with such earnestness and importunity, that the Lord said, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them," Exod. xxxii. 10; Deut. ix. 14.

Daniel increased in importunity, as he proceeded in his beautiful and instructive prayer. He obtained an immediate answer when his petitions became thus vehement and pressing, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God," Dan. ix. 19.

In the gospels we read how the Syrophenician woman prevailed with our Lord by the power of her importunity, and obtained that blessing for her daughter which otherwise she should not have enjoyed. She earnestly besought him, but he answered her not a word. She fell at his feet, but he turned away and passed on. His own disciples entreated him on her behalf, because she cried after them; but he informed them that his commission was only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Still came the woman and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me." But he answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." With an earnestness which nothing could abate, and a faith which no objection could stagger, she at once admitted the truth of what he said, and converted it into an argument in her own favour, "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." Then Jesus exclaimed, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt," Matt. xv. 22—28; Mark vii. 25—30.

Fourthly, Its absence is complained of. When the prophet confesses the great wickedness of the people, that all were as an unclean thing, that even all their righteousnesses were as filthy rags, and that God had hid his face from them, and consumed them because of their iniquities, even then he complains, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee;" and immediately sets himself with great earnestness to intercessory prayer, Isa. lxiv.

In various other parts of Scripture the same complaint is expressed or implied, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together," Isa. xliii. 22, 26. "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none," Ezek. xxii. 30. "He saw that there was no man; and he wondered that there was no intercessor," Isa. lix. 16; see also Isa. ix. 13; xxxi. 1; Jer. x. 21, 25; Zeph. i. 6; Isa. xli. 28.

It is recorded against Asa that in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians, 2 Chron. xvi. 12; and it is assigned as the reason of Rehoboam's doing evil, "because he prepared (or fixed) not his heart to seek the Lord," 2 Chron. xii. 14.

Hosea testifies that the wickedness of the people was highly aggravated by their restraining prayer in their afflictions. "They have not cried unto me, when they howled upon their beds," vii. 14; also verses 7 and 10. With the same earnestness and vehemency, with which they vociferated their distresses, so ought they to have called upon their God. But because they refused to do so, the Most High determined, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early," chap. v. 15.

Amos also specifies this as a peculiar feature of the prevailing depravity. He enumerates the various judgments by which God had visited the nation; and five times successively adds, to each of them, "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," chaps. iv. vi. viii. ix. x. xi. He complains also that there is none to raise up the fallen virgin of Israel; yet affectionately entreats them still to seek the Lord, and twice encourages them with the assurance that, if they do so, they shall live, chap. v. 2, 4, 6.

Were we to enter more into God's feelings as a father, and think of his eye resting on this broad earth, where so many millions of his creatures are too earnest and busy to remember him, we should be better able to understand his complaint of the restraining of prayer, and his delight in those who acknowledge him. Oh how little is God accustomed to hear the voice of earnest, heart-felt, persevering prayer! How continually does the Lord witness our anxieties and exertions spent in vain attempts to extricate ourselves, and effect that deliverance which he is able in a moment to grant in answer to prayer. Men may be brought to their wit's end, and never think of calling upon God; yet if, even then, they cry unto the Lord, he will bring them out of their distresses, Psa. cvii. 27, 28. In every circumstance and trial of life—whether in extremity of homeless wandering, of poverty and hunger, ver. 5; in prison and cruel bondage, ver. 10, 14; in disease, pining sickness, and when at the point of death, ver. 18; on the stormy deep and in the threatening tempest, ver. 25; or when vegetation fails, and famine feeds on once fruitful fields, ver. 34, 38; let men but then turn to the Lord with strong crying and tears in all these calamities, and they shall find that he is very pitiful and of tender mercy, James v. 11. Whoso is wise, and will observe the various turnings of this changeful life, shall learn from them all, the loving-kindness of the Lord, Psa. cvii. 43. Hezekiah's prayer was answered when he wept sore, Isa. xxxviii. 3, 5. Even the wicked Ahab was pitied, when he humbled himself before the Lord, 1 Kings xxi. 27—29. And the idolatrous Ninevites were accepted, when they cried mightily unto God, Jonah iii. 8—10. Let not, then, the greatest of your earthly trials, or even the remembrance of your foulest sins, shut up your heart in despondency, or prevent you from confessing your guilt, bewailing your condition, and fervently, and perseveringly, imploring mercy from the Father of mercies.

Secondly, If it be allowable, nay, a commanded duty, for sinners to approach the God of heaven in prayer, with importunate petitions, we must next inquire, *On what grounds?* First, we answer, it must *not* be on the ground of any claim which we possess to mercy, or of any merit which our penitence, or tears, or prayers, can furnish. Full consciousness of unworthiness produces a sorrow which, however great, can never be more than just. We must be entirely driven out of that all confidence in ourselves; be brought to see that we deserve only ruin and condemnation; and so be taught to cast ourselves simply on the clemency and goodness of Jehovah. Instead of extenuating our guilt, and using mild and softening terms, we will ingenuously confess all its aggravations, and cast the multitude of our sins upon the immeasurable mercies of the Most High; we will use this extraordinary, but prevailing argument, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great," Psa. xxv. 11. Secondly, it must be solely on the ground of God's mere mercy and goodness. Leaving ourselves wholly to his disposal; acknowledging that though the severest judgments come forth against us, they are only what we deserve; we must cast our care on the heart of a Father, saying with David, "I am in a great strait; let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies," 1 Chron. xxi. 13. This is what the Ninevites did. And never was an appeal made to the heart of God, without success.

But, thirdly, the Divine mercy has been revealed only in Christ Jesus. That sacrifice which satisfied the justice, has fully exhibited the goodness, of God. The Lord has come forth to man, in a full, but peculiar measure, of mercy. He who would approach his Creator, overlooking the atonement and propitiation by the blood of Jesus, is guilty of despising that very way which he professes to seek. "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Jesus Christ, Acts iv. 12. It was therefore with earnest care that our Lord instructed his disciples to present all their prayers to God, "in his name," John xvi. 23, 24. This expression signifies for his sake, and on his authority. Too commonly it is limited to the former sense. But our gracious Redeemer means that we should apply to the treasury of heaven, as beggars would at a bank, in the name of an individual whose credit is unlimited. Having taken the bankrupt name, he gives us his own instead. Therefore the apostle exhorts us to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," Col. iii. 17. "To give thanks always for all things in the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ," Eph. v. 20. And our Lord assures us, "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," John xvi. 23.

It is, then, on the ground of our Surety's merits, that we must present all our petitions. The very fact of the existence of a surety, a gratuitously provided surety, proves the goodness of the great Creditor, in a manner which even the immediate discharge of the debt could not have demonstrated. We might have supposed, that he had easily pardoned that, by which he was no loser. But the providing of an atonement, shows that a great loss had been suffered by sin; and the sacrificing of His own Son to accomplish that atonement, exhibits God as a double loser, in effecting the salvation of man. The goodness of God, therefore, stands out to view in magnificent prominence. We hear it uttered by the loud voice from Calvary, with an emphasis that should rouse the attention of the dead, and impart eternal stability to the faith of the living. The goodness of the Divine Father, exhibited in the sacrifice of his own Son, is that alone to which the Eternal Spirit directs our thoughts; on this he fixes our hopes; here he bids us to cast, without the shadow of a misgiving or a fear, all our cares and anxieties. Therefore the apostle demands, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness?" knowest thou not that "the goodness of God" is designed to lead thee "to repentance?" Rom. ii. 4. Since God, then, has exhibited such love, take heed that you "continue in his goodness," Rom. xi. 22. Never allow dark and despairing thoughts to take possession of your breast. "The goodness of God endureth continually," Psa. lii. 1. Let your confidence in, and your engagements with, that goodness, be therefore in continual exercise. When Moses prayed, "Show me thy *glory*;" the Lord answered, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee," Exodus xxxiii. 19. The glory of God is his goodness. When the seraphim praise the high and lofty One, they say, "The whole earth is full of his *glory*," Isa. vi. 3. And when the psalmist would praise him, he exclaims, "The earth is full of his *goodness*," Psa. xxxiii. 5. When Paul looks forward to the inheritance above, he denominates it, "An exceeding, even an eternal weight of *glory*," 2 Cor. iv. 17. And when David expatiates on the same enlivening theme, he cries, "O how great is thy *goodness*, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" Psa. xxxi. 19.

"In the divine nature," says a profound writer,* "both religion and philosophy have acknowledged goodness in perfection; wisdom or providence comprehending all things; and absolute sovereignty or kingdom. In aspiring to the throne of *power*, angels transgressed and fell. In presuming to come within the oracle of *knowledge*, man transgressed and fell. But in pursuit towards the similitude of God's *goodness*, or love, neither man, nor spirit, ever hath transgressed, or shall transgress. The Devil being an angel of light, affected power. Man being endowed with power, affected light or knowledge. Intruding into God's secrets or mysteries, he was rewarded with a further removing or estranging from God's presence. But as to God's *goodness* there is no danger in contending for, or advancing towards, a similitude thereof. In that point we can commit no excess." This leads us,

Thirdly, to inquire *to what extent may a sinner*, being allowed on these good grounds, *proceed in importunity of prayer?* We answer, he can commit no excess. The further he thus proceeds, the greater will the goodness of the Most High appear to him; the more he trusts to it, the more will it uphold him. Importunity in prayer, is a pressing into the goodness of God. Instead of regarding him as either unwilling or unable to help, it exhibits him as ready as he is all-powerful. "Them that honour me, I will honour." The highest honour we can pay to God is to honour him with our confidence. Apart from this, mere outward services are destitute of their only acceptable ingredient, the homage of the heart. Confidence, then, in the goodness of God, if it exist at all, ought to exist in proportion to the amount of his goodness. There can be evidently no limit to the measure of our trust, except that which is furnished by that on which we trust. If that be small, our confidence must be small. If that be unlimited, our confidence in it ought to be unlimited. See how fully the patriarch Job understood the grounds of his confidence, and the unlimited extent to which he might, as it were, trespass on the goodness of the Lord. "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge," Job xxiii. 3—7. The "righteous" are those who present themselves before God in the imputed righteousness of Christ. All their reasonings and arguments are based on the merits of their Surety. They wrestle in his name against their sins, their doubts, and fears. In his strength they fight against all the temptations and evil suggestions of the enemy of their souls; and even when afflicted with desertion and darkness, when the light of God's countenance is withdrawn, they yet stay themselves on a withdrawing God, and presume upon that great goodness which, as it gave

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* Bacon.

Christ, will also with him freely give all things, Rom. viii. 32. Like the psalmist, he humbly argues with the Lord, "What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise thee, shall it declare thy truth?" Psa. xxx. 9. With the prophet also he adds, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk," or reason the case, "with thee of thy judgments," Jer. xii. 1.

It is then only on the ground of the Saviour's atoning sacrifice, that we can either offer the smallest petition, or rise to any degree of confidence in presenting it. In using the Saviour's name, however, we shall do him great dishonour, if we place not the fullest confidence in his acceptance with his Father. Were we invoking the name of a saint or an angel, there would be great cause for fear and hesitation. But not so when we employ the name of God's own and beloved Son. All that God has belongs to him; every thing that God can give, is open to his use; and it proves that we have little confidence either in God the Father, or in Christ the Son, when we address the one in the name of the other, and yet doubt whether a blessing will be given. It may be answered, "I do not doubt either God's willingness, or Christ's merits, but I doubt my own worthiness to partake of the benefits of his righteousness;" we reply, You have no right to doubt your own worthiness. You ought to be as positively certain of your unworthiness, as you are of your own existence. Your worthiness, or unworthiness, is not a matter of opinion. It is a revealed truth that you are altogether unworthy. The very fact of a provided surety-righteousness implies it. And it is with the full consciousness of your own unworthiness, that we would press you to cast yourselves directly upon the surety-righteousness, as an all-sufficient and all-prevailing argument with God. Again it may be objected, "I neither doubt the goodness of God, nor my own unworthiness; but I know not that what I pray for is agreeable to the will of God; how, then, can I be importunate?" This is an important matter. We shall consider the things which may be asked in prayer, under three heads:—First, those in which the will of God is eternally and immutably the same. Second, those concerning which he has revealed his will particularly and expressly in the Holy Scriptures. And third, those which are circumstantial and personal. In regard to the first things, there ought not to exist any doubt in our minds, when we pray to God for them. The will of God must unchangeably and eternally be fixed on holiness. Whatever then is connected with the hallowing of God's name, or the sanctification of your own heart, should be the object of your fervent faith, your most ardent prayers. The hand of the diligent maketh rich; holiness is the gold of heaven; and in proportion to your diligence, perseverance, and earnestness, in prayer, so will be your increase in eternal wealth. Secondly, those things which God has revealed: as for instance, that his kingdom shall come, and that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth; being, with other truths, positively revealed, there is as little room to doubt regarding their ultimate fulfilment, as there is great room to pray for their speedy accomplishment. The Lord himself has appointed prayer to be the antecedent means, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. To encourage this inquiry, the Lord condescends to say, "Ask me of things to come concerning my sons: and concerning the work of my hands command ye me," Isa. xlv. 11. And our Lord teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," Matt. vi. 10.

In reference, therefore, to these two great divisions of things that may be prayed for, there ought to exist in the mind, the fullest assurance that they shall be granted; not because we pray for them, but because they are agreeable to the will of God; and because we know them to be so, we pray that his will in all things may be done, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Importunity here, therefore, may be to any extent, and can commit no excess.

In regard to the third division, namely, those petitions which are suggested by our own personal and peculiar circumstances; since we know not the will of God, we can pray in faith, and with importunity, only when the desire itself is holy, and when we submit resignedly to the unknown will, whatever it may be. Our Lord in Gethsemane exhibited the fullest resignation, in harmony with the most earnest importunity. It is alike necessary to our submission, as to our fervency, that we believe God's will to be good—"good-will towards men." In mentioning, therefore, any temporal matter in prayer, we must leave it entirely and confidently to the good will of God. We must also settle it in our minds, whether it be indispensable to our salvation. It may be good for us that we should never obtain it. In distresses and difficulties, (for it grieves the heart of our Father to witness the extremities of his creatures,) we may spread our case with great freedom before the Lord; casting ourselves upon his goodness in Christ, we may use great importunity of entreaty for deliverance; but as we know not what is best for ourselves, even in such cases, we consult our own happiness, as well as discharge an incumbent duty, when we renounce our own wishes, saying, "not my will, but thine be done." In regard, however, to spiritual blessings, in which we positively know that God is glorified, as well as our own sanctification promoted, we need employ no reserving clause. To say in such prayers, "not my will but thine be done," is to imply that our desire is to attain holy graces, but that God's will is to deprive us of them. When we say spiritual blessings, we do not allude to the *gifts*, but to the *graces* of the Spirit. The former are given severally to every man as the Lord the Spirit sees fit to minister. But in regard to the graces—love, joy, meekness, temperance, &c., against which there is no law human or divine, there is no limit to the bounty of God, and should be none to our requests. When we pray for these, we ought not to entertain any doubts as to their being given us. In proportion to the value we attach to them, and the fulness of our desire for their possession, so will be our earnestness and importunity in prayer to obtain them. To this, however, we are brought only by the Spirit of grace and of supplications, Zech. xii. 10. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God," Rom. viii. 26, 27.

The greatest of all spiritual and eternal blessings, is the presence of God. On this our heart's strongest desires ought to be fixed. This is the subject which warrants and rewards the most vehement importunity. Even in the greatest darkness of soul, even while the countenance of God is withdrawn, nothing can honour God more as a Creator, or gratify his heart more as a Parent, than that we should make the light of his countenance, the first and last object of our desires, and be restless and unhappy so long as it is turned away from us. Indeed, not to be importunate after this, proves that we are destitue of the feelings of a child, and shows that we possess little or no love to our heavenly Father. It was this that well nigh burst the filial heart of Christ, in the garden, and on the cross. His whole soul desired to enjoy the smile of his Father's countenance. He knew the goodness of his Father, and he knew that the further he pressed into it, the more of it he should obtain.

In regard, then, Christian reader, to the extent to which you may use importunity in prayer, here is the greatest of all spiritual and eternal blessings open to you. "The Lord God is a sun and a shield; he will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psa. lxxxiv. 11. The Lord will bestow HIMSELF. Ask largely, and you shall obtain largely; pray earnestly, and you shall receive immediately. God is not willing to hide his face for ever from you. His intention is this, "I will return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face," Hosea v. 15. "Seek the Lord, then, and his strength; seek his face evermore," Psa. cv. 4. Strive to be able to say, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek," Psa. xxvii. 8. Though enveloped in thick darkness, yet remember that "The Lord is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think," Eph. iii. 20. If, then, like your great High Priest, you are in darkness and desertion, still pray for the return of God's presence to your soul; no petition can you present more agreeable to his ear, or more conducive to your own salvation. Be encouraged, then, to imitate this example, by considering that he who left it is now interceding at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Come, therefore, boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16; and cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, Heb. x. 35, "for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," Heb. iii. 14.

Keep close, then, under the sheltering wing of Jesus;

in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him, Eph. iii. 12. Begin, continue, and end all your hopes in Him; place the fullest confidence in his acceptance with his Father; draw out all your arguments from the treasury of his righteousness; present them without doubting; urge them without hesitation. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake." Bring this forth, then, as your strong reason; and with ceaseless importunity, as you value your own salvation, plead it before God. Will he plead against you with his great power? No; he will put strength in you to persevere, till, like your Lord, you are able to exclaim, "Thou hast heard me."

CHRIST ON THE CROSS IN LIGHT.

THE DELIVERANCE.

VERSE 21.—*Thou hast heard me.**

IMPORTUNITY prevails with God. He that will not be satisfied without the blessing, shall be satisfied with it. Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find; knock, and you shall gain admittance. Christ spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint. He here proves the truth of his own teaching. During this whole morning of persecution, his mind was stayed on God. Throughout the period of desertion, his soul earnestly sought the comforting presence of his Father. In the heaviest gloom of the darkness, he yielded not, but still pressed forward in spirit to the light. Now the light is come—the true light of a Father's love—a Father's countenance of gracious approbation. God withstands his pleading no longer. Though he does not grant it to him because he is a friend—a son—yet because of his importunity, he giveth him whatever he needeth. All that the holy Christ needs, or desires, is centred in God himself, "Thou art my life, my light, my peace, my bliss, my all; thy smile is my sunshine; thy approbation my prosperity; thy love my reward; thy glory my crown; without thee I am poor; and with thee rich, take what thou wilt away." Now all this is come. The tide of eternal love flows in full current into the heart of Christ. The stream of his love had never ceased; as a river to the sea, it had still sent its waters to their source. Christ had come forth from the bosom of the Father; throughout life he enjoyed uninterrupted communion with him—conscious possession of a home in his heart. On the cross, however, nothing but a dark thick cloud could be discerned. His affections rose up as before, but there was no return as formerly—no response. The arrow of prayer seemed to be lost in the depths of that cloud, yet he believed that his own Father lived beyond; he still felt persuaded that Father loved him; he still believed that the door of his Father's house would not be always shut against him. Now his faith is victorious. God, as it were, addresses him, as he himself did the Syrophenician woman, "O Son, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Christ's importunity had said, as it were, "I will have light;" and the Hearer of prayer answered, "Thou shalt have light." Christ's strong love could not, and would not, bear putting away; it intimated, "I will never rest till I enjoy communion with thee again." The Father replied, "Thou shalt be admitted to the fulness of joy in my presence." And here the suppliant Saviour exclaims with gratitude and exultation of heart, "Thou hast heard me."

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* For the transposition here adopted, see Bishop Horsley. Ainsworth, in his Annotations, says, "Thou hast answered me;" a speech of faith inserted in his prayers, therefore next followeth thanksgiving. "*Answering*" is here used for *safe delivering upon prayer,* as the Chaldee translateth, "*hast accepted my prayer.*"

The psalm is thus divided into two parts. The first in darkness, and the second in light. The one all sorrow, the other all gladness; the one descriptive of the sufferings of Christ, the other of the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11; the one expressing Christ's endurance of the cross, the other the joy that was set before him, Heb. xii. 2.

What a relieving view does this present of the dark hour of the crucifixion! It removes the painful doubt;

it shows us that the Son of God departed not out of this life under the hidings of his Father's countenance. Disquietude and anguish of spirit were dispelled; every troubled feeling was hushed to repose; the lowering clouds of evening were dissipated, and the Sun of Righteousness set in the calm effulgence of pure and glorious light.

What an example of the power of fervent, persevering prayer is here set before us! The advocate had urged every plea, had addressed God by every name and character, had set forth the necessities of his case in the most urgent manner, had returned again and again with complaint, and appeal, and argument, and entreaty, and at last had set himself as an importunate suitor that would take no further denial. This prevails. God grants his request to the very utmost. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," Matt. xi. 12. Like Jacob of old, the Saviour said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," Gen. xxxii. 26. And he was blessed; all his petitions were granted; the whole tone of feeling and of desire is altered. Who can express what the Saviour must have felt? The psalm changes from sorrow to joy. "Thou hast heard me," is the first cry of victory. It is not, "I have prevailed; I have conquered;" but it is, "Thou hast heard me." The honour is all given to God. He that sitteth on the throne is true and faithful. To Him be all the glory!

Let the desponding Christian take courage. Deliverance shall be sent. Light must soon arise. "In due season you shall reap if you faint not." Beware of timid thoughts and anxious fears. Lay hold on God's strength; "He never said to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain," Isa. xlv. 19. God is the hearer of prayer. He will in no wise cast out those who come to him in his Son. Let this successful example of that Son be ever before your mind. Like him, be unwearied in supplication. As he is your best pattern, so let him be your only ground of confidence, in prayer. Let the word, or doctrine, of his suretyship and righteousness abide in you. His word will purify your desires. Longings after things that are holy, just, and good, will be kindled by the Spirit of holiness within your breast. The earnestness of your petitions will be expended on heavenly realities; and if his word thus abide in you, you shall ask WHAT YOU WILL, and it shall be done unto you, John xv. 7.

How powerful is the *will*, for good or evil! The sinner *will not* abandon his pleasures, he refuses to receive correction; he will go on, though it be to destruction; and he shall go. The true Christian, however, is one who is *made willing* by the Spirit of God, to do the very reverse. He is willing to abandon sin; he hates it; he *will* seek to be pure, he *will* strive to be holy, he *will* "follow hard after God;" and he shall find him; and he shall be sanctified.

The promise made by the Father to the Son is, "Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power," Psa. cx. 3. Till God's Power, even his Holy Spirit, come into the heart, man is willing to walk only in the way of that heart. His will goes forth spontaneously, to the things that please him. It does so naturally, and without an effort. When therefore the Quickener enters, in the day of his power, he first works in the man to will, and then to do, of God's good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13. This is a rational mode. It is exactly according to the manner in which we influence our fellow-men. Our own will being directed towards an object, in which we wish their assistance, we first set ourselves to gain their will, their consent, then their co-operation. To this end we show them how good, desirable, and advantageous, the object is. We remove their prejudices. We succeed in turning the full tide of their inclination towards that, which they at first, perhaps, regarded with aversion. Our end is gained. They become one with us in spirit. So is it with the work of the Spirit of God. He finds the *will* of every man turned away from the Creator—fixed on self and worldly objects. He seeks to change that will, and therefore shows how good God is, how advantageous his service, how dangerous the course we are pursuing. He desires us to turn to God, and he shows God turned towards us. He commands us to love our heavenly Father, and he proves how much he loves us. He enjoins us to serve God, and he exhibits him serving our cause, and securing our best interests, in the person of his own Son. Apart from Jesus, the Spirit of God does nothing. From him, all the lessons of heavenly wisdom are derived. The sufferings and death of Christ in our room and stead, form the grand arguments by which the Spirit of God influences the human will.

Nor is the mode of this operation of the Lord the Spirit, either mysterious or extravagant. He deals with our souls in a distinct and intelligible manner. He influences our mind by the truths contained in the Holy Scriptures. When we open these treasures of wisdom, he opens our hearts to believe that there is reality in what we read. He teaches our consciences to give every word its own pointed meaning, and a personal application to our own hearts and lives. For instance, when we read of the love of Christ, he enables us to say, "It is true; therefore he loved me and gave himself for me." When we read, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation," he inclines us to add, "It is right; therefore I will seek to be altogether holy." How different this to the listless manner in which we before traced the sacred page! This is life: it is reality; it is intelligence; it is just what ought to be. It is not the formal perusal of one chapter after another; promises, threatenings, commandments, sounding in our ears in one unbroken and unmeaning monotony. It is the spirit of the reader catching (rather caught by) the Spirit of the Author, and entering into each varied sentiment, with all the zest and animation of an understanding intellect, an approving conscience, and an obedient heart. This makes man a new creature towards God. This is his being born again, born of the Spirit, "begotten by the truth." As says James, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." As Peter also, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." Our blessed Saviour likewise in his intercession for the infant church thus prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And it appears to be in answer to this solemn prayer, that in the first council held at Jerusalem, the Hebrew testified thus regarding the Gentile converts, "God put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

What a deliverance is this! The man is passed from darkness into light. The end is gained. He has become one in spirit with the great Spirit. He now wills to do what God would have him. He wills to be holy, to be like God. Through every trial of prosperity and adversity he still desires the same thing. Though providential dispensations change, and sun and storms alternate, he keeps on his way, following hard in spirit after the scource of light and love. His will, in believing prayer, prevails with God, because it is consonant to the will of God. And, like the Saviour, he issues forth from the darkest cloud, exclaiming, "Thou hast heard me."

The natural man, in his unconverted state, is thus made a conscious example of the power of the Divine Will. He is changed into a new creature. He experiences a spiritual resurrection. He passes from death to life. As, in this change, we witness an exemplification of the power of the will of the Holy Spirit, on unbelieving man; so we are permitted to witness, in the development and progress of this new spiritual life, instances of the power of the believer's will, on a condescending and prayer-hearing God. The simplest prayer is a sublime mystery. The feeble voice of a child, influences the great God. A burdened, conscience-stricken, offender, who smites upon his breast, and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner," moves the heart of his Creator, and changes his dealings towards him. "Prayer moves the arm that moves the world." Whence is this? The secret of the mystery consists in this, that prayer is a spiritual act. It is the operation of the Spirit of God. No heavenly desires, no confessions of sin, no breathings after God, can rise in any human breast, without the direct and immediate agency of the Holy Ghost. He worketh in every man. His visitings are witnessed in every conscience. Without him we are not only asleep, we are dead, in soul. If, then, the Spirit be the author of prayer, it necessarily follows that all his suggestions therein will be according to the will of God, Rom. viii. 27. It is obvious that he cannot, and will not, inspire any desire, but what is in full accordance with the Holy Mind. Our will, then, in prayer, is the will of the Spirit of God; the object to which our desires are drawn, is the object which God desires; the strength of our affection towards it, is the power of the Spirit working in us; the earnest importunity which we exercise in prayer, is the expression of the intensity of the Holy Spirit's desire for the accomplishment of the object; and the success which attends believing and fervent prayer, is the crowning act of Him who begins, continues, and ends, all good works in us. The mystery, then, is explained. Prayer prevails, because God inspires it. He works in us to ask, because he purposes to perform. The prayer that precedes, is as much his work, as the blessing which follows is his gift. Prayer is itself part of the blessing. But it may be objected, "It is presumptuous to say, or imagine, that all our prayers are inspired by the Holy Ghost." But remember, we now speak only of true, spiritual prayer. Alas, the great majority of our prayers are but collections of words. To read over a page or two of devotional expressions, is not prayer; to pour forth an extempore address to God, is not prayer; these may bear the appearance, but we now speak of the reality of prayer. True prayer is the utterance of the heart—the soul's conference with its God. The sacred term of *prayer* ought never to be applied to any thing beside. When, then, we state the scriptural position, that the heart is dead towards God, and not only cannot utter, but has nothing within it to utter before him, we must arrive at the conclusion, that wherever, in the universal family of man, there is a conscience partially, or fully, enlightened, a heart faintly stirring towards God, or earnestly inquiring after him, that conscience, and that heart, derive their light, and their desires, only and entirely from the Spirit of light and life, of grace and of supplications. Presumption, then, lies not in saying, "Thou, Lord, hast wrought all our works in us;" but in imagining that we possess the good in ourselves. The deepest humiliation leads us to say, "I cannot think a right thought of myself." The presumption consists in saying, I need not the Spirit of God to assist me to pray. See Jude 20; Eph. vi. 18.

Reader, this is a solemn heart-searching truth. O how it condemns our cold, formal, heartless, prayers. These never reach the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. If you would prevail in prayer, your whole heart must be engaged in your petitions; be in earnest; let your application to the true Physician be as much a reality, as is your consultation with him who relieves your bodily diseases. Under a sense of pain and agony, your heart is not listless, nor your words unmeaning. Realize to yourself that the Lord is a living, acting, being. If you can rest quiet under trouble, without casting it upon God; if you can lie under the hidings of his face, and not feel the most overpowering anxiety to be restored to favour; it is only natural and proper that you should remain burdened and uncomforted; to relieve you from sorrow, while in such a state of mind, would prove your ruin. If the rod bring not the child to a right mind, its removal is more fraught with danger than its continuance. The wise parent perseveres with the chastisement, till it accomplish the desired end; his severity is the fruit of judicious love; he is more anxious to withdraw the infliction, than to administer it; he would not continue it one moment longer than is absolutely necessary.

If, then, O Christian, you are now lying under the hidings of your heavenly Father's countenance, desist not from prayer. Again, and again, and again, return; seek opportunities of pouring out your heart—your whole heart; let not one thought, or feeling, or desire, remain unbosomed. Seek also public means of grace; with those of the worshipping assembly, let your confessions and supplications be intermingled; at all times, and in all places, however your hands may be occupied, let your heart be engaged with God. Unknown to all around you, let quick, successive, earnest, ejaculutions, waft your spirit in silence, from the presence of men, to the presence-chamber of the great King. Remember, there is ONE standing there, ready to present your petition; put it into his hand, he can fully sympathize in the most delicate feeling, the most pressing want, the most unutterable anguish. Give many petitions, and furnish many arguments, that he may have many to present in your name; be importunate with him, that he may be able to carry forward your importunity to his Father. Remember, that he intercedes in your name, when you pray in his; those petitions alone, rise to heaven, which are presented in his name; no blessings descend to us, but those to which the great High Priest attaches our names. Meditate much on this point; it will give you clear views in reference to prayer; it will strengthen you to be humbly bold, and earnest, and importunate. Christ gives you his name to use, and you must give him yours to present; Christ gives you his righteousness as your plea and argument, and you must return it to your Advocate as the only plea to be urged on your behalf; Christ gives you his Holy Spirit, and you must give him your whole spirit; for the worshippers whom he regards, are those who pray in spirit and in truth. Remember, that you are permitted to draw upon the Eternal Bank only in the name of your Surety; and that to benefit you, he also must draw expressly in your name. You must therefore pray, not in general and indefinite terms, but in special and particular requests; you must state your case, its name and nature, with its every modification of circumstance; you must confess your utter inability to help yourself, and your great unworthiness that he should do any thing for you: you must specify the particular *blessing* you wish, the *amount* of it that is necessary, and the *time* by which it must be received. According to your urgency of petition and strength of faith, so shall it be done unto you. The great and gracious Surety has placed his own interest at the treasury of heaven to your use; with the tenderest consideration he has put a letter of unlimited credit into your hands, signed and sealed with his own blood; he has said, "If my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you," John xv. 7. Here is the ground and warrant of your request. It is sufficient for your case, even though it were ten times more sad, sinful, and insupportable. On this ground it is impossible to use too great a boldness of petition, too vehement an urgency of prayer. It is only, *if* the words of Christ be kept in remembrance, so as to regulate our wills and desires, that we have any right to expect a blessing, or even to ask for its bestowal. The carnal mind thinks itself entitled, from a partial view of this passage, to ask for the gratification of its desires, for whatever things it will; and when these are withheld, the father of lies tempts it to turn infidel, and to discard the Bible, as a book of deceptive promises. But the regenerate heart seeks to have its desires sanctified, and fixed only on the things which God approves, and then it knows it cannot covet too large a portion of spiritual blessings. This is what the Saviour means; he says, "If my words abide in you." His "words" contain a declaration of the name of him to whom we are to approach; that name is THE FATHER; his "words" inform us that the Father's favour is life, and that the Father's presence is salvation; his "words" direct us to make God the sum and centre of our desires, teach us that seeking after him is our first duty, and declare that apart from his blessing, nothing can be really desirable or beneficial.

If, then, these words abide in your heart, they will actuate and govern all its desires; your will shall be subdued to the will of God; your deliberate and principal desire will be to enjoy his love, to be purified for his communion, and to be wholly and completely his, in soul and body, in time and eternity. Having thus your whole mind directed to one object, namely, the Divine will: you may ask what you will in reference to its accomplishment, and it shall be done unto you. The more petitions you thus present, the more answers shall be vouchsafed. The greater urgency you use, the sooner shall you be relieved. The more pressing and importunate you are on this ground, for immediate audience, and instant deliverance, the more certain, and prompt, will be your success. It was thus Jesus prayed, who is the High Priest of our profession. What is the subject of his prayer? What is the ever recurring petition which he presents? Is it to be taken from the cross—to be removed from under the affliction? Is it to have the pains of his body mitigated—his revilers blasted—or his own death prevented? By no means. On none of these is the filial heart of Jesus set. The full current of his thoughts flows towards one object—the favour of God, and the return of conscious enjoyment of that favour. Was it not this which extorted the bitter cry, "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Is it not his twice repeated entreaty? "Be not thou far from me." Does he not press himself, as it were, upon his Father's attention, as one that belonged to him, and for whom it was his duty to care, saying, "I was cast upon thee from the womb?" And when the light returns, and peace dispels the sorrow, what is the argument by which he seeks to influence his Church's gratitude, and excite her praises of his Father? Is it not because he had "not hid his face from him?" This was the pearl of price for which the God-man cast aside every other consideration. Pains, sorrows, griefs, enemies, tortures, and death itself, were all as nothing in his estimation, when compared with the light of his Father's countenance. This was worthy of Christ: his filial heart fastened its affections on a Father's love. He felt death in every thing else. He never would, he never could, rest contented till he enjoyed it again. Alas! it is our sin and shame, that this is not the first and highest object of our desires. Not to be importunate after *this*, is a spiritual crime of a grievous nature. If a justly offended earthly father, turn from us, till we confess our offence, and implore reconciliation, is it not adding sin to sin, if we delay our acknowledgment, and feel indifferent to his friendship? Does it not prove that we are fast sinking in the moral scale, becoming hardened and insensible to every finer feeling of our nature, if we can contentedly pass year after year without caring for a father's love, or imploring his paternal benediction? How much more guilty, and lost in depravity of feeling, is it to continue our impenitence and disregard, in the face of daily proofs of that father's love and kindness? Should he prevent our painful confession and acknowledgment, by overtures of friendship; should he himself anticipate our request, by entreating us to be reconciled; and should he try to effect our reformation and secure our love, by a frank and generous declaration of his forgiveness, how obdurate and seared must the heart be that rejects him! Yet this is what we do against God. He is our Father; he is the Parent we have offended, yet it is he that begins the reconciliation, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. It is his bounty that supplies us every moment, and his heart that is wounded by our indifference and unconcern. See then what necessity there is for your instantaneous repentance, and immediate confession and supplication. Learn what enormity it is, not to be anxious and importunate to enjoy the light of the Father's countenance. O man! draw hither all your thoughts—here centre your affections—on this fix your most intense desires. Immortal being! love, and seek unto, Him who gave thee being and immortality with a breath! Say with David, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," Psa. xlii. 1, 2. And again, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," Psa. lxxxiv. 2. If the heavy affliction under which you lie, prevent your rising to such a full, ardent, and undivided, desire after God, yet let not the strong current of your affections be lost in other channels. Call home your thoughts, summon your utmost resolution, look to the Holy Spirit for strength, and give yourselves to fervent, unceasing, and importunate prayer. See how earnest and importunate the psalmist is under a similar affliction, which again sets him forth to view as a type of the Man of Sorrows. Hear how he pleads and prays, how he supplicates and entreats, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me; in the truth of thy salvation. Deliver me out of the mire—let me not sink—let not the water-flood overflow me—let not the deep swallow me up. Hear me, O Lord, turn unto me—hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble—hear me speedily—draw nigh unto my soul—redeem it—deliver me," Psa. lxix. Imitate this example; set no bounds to your prayer, no limit, no termination, but success. Pray till you be heard. Pray till you obtain admission to his favour again. You shall not require to use such importunity long. "In due season you shall reap if you faint not." Like David, you shall be enabled to add, "I will praise the name of God with a song: I will magnify him with thanksgiving," ver. 30. Or like your Lord, your darkness shall be turned into light, and while you are yet speaking, God will answer, and cause you, by the blessed nearness of his presence, to exclaim, "Thou hast heard me."

THE GRATITUDE.

Verse 22.—*I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*

Having thus obtained relief from the oppressive darkness, and regained conscious possession of the joy and light of his Father's countenance, the Redeemer's thoughts and desires flow into their accustomed channel. What is that channel? The glory of God in the salvation of his Church. These were the two objects for which he had lived more than thirty years. He never had a thought or wish that was not intimately connected with the one or the other. But we must not call them two, as though they were entirely distinct. In the heart of Christ these two were one. It was not only God's glory for which he lived; it was not only man's salvation for which he died; it was for both; it was the one in the other. It was to glorify God in saving man, and to save man in glorifying God, that Christ lived and died. God was glorified in the declaration of his name; man was saved by means of that declaration; Christ's thoughts therefore ran instantly to their grand, their twofold, object. He bursts forth with an acclamation of praise; he utters aloud his Father's goodness, and his own gratitude; he expresses anew his determination and delight to do the duty he had undertaken, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."

How amiable, how lovely, does the Lord appear, to the Christian's apprehension, when he thus speaks! He is still the same kind friend that he was before our sins pierced him; he uses the same gracious term as formerly; he has not forgotten us; his spiritual resurrection is accomplished; the first name he utters is, "my brethren." After his literal resurrection, he did the same. When Mary met him near the sepulchre, he said, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God," John xx. 17.

Gracious Saviour, how full of love thou art! What condescension is in thy nature! what tenderness in thy words! Thou dost unite us so with God; our timid hearts are comforted, our consciences quieted. What we could not venture to hope, thou teachest us to believe. We know thy Sonship, but we doubt our own; yet in one breath thou callest God thy Father, and ours also, as if thou wouldst prove, beyond all doubt, that in thee, he is ours, and that through thee, we are his. It is so of a truth. We behold God in thee, and are glad; God beholds our nature in thee, and is satisfied. Glorious Reconciler, in thy single person accepting manhood and bestowing Godhead! More blessed in thy giving than in thy receiving. Thou hast condescended to take our form, and we will aspire to be conformed to thine image, that thou mayest be the first-born among many brethren, Rom. viii. 29. Blessed art thou, infinitely more blessed, in giving the name of brethren, than in receiving that of brother! We hesitate to call thee so, because it seems to do thee a dishonour; yet thou art not ashamed to call us brethren, as if it were thy glory, Heb. ii. 11. Well mayest thou ask, "Who are my brethren?" for whosoever shall do the will of thy Father which is in heaven, the same only is thy brother, Matt. xii. 48, 50. O help us then to live as ought the brethren of the Holy One;

let this be a name of power within us; let it kindle in us all brotherly affections and kindred desires; let it influence us to live worthy of thy name; may we who have already laid enough of sin on thy devoted head, henceforth cast it from us and from thee! Like the brethren of Joseph, may we live on the fulness, and rejoice in the brotherhood, of Him whom we stripped and sold! This will delight thy heart; thou shalt see of the travail of thy soul, and shalt be satisfied; thou wilt glorify thy Father; thou wilt magnify his name with thanksgivings; in the midst of the congregation wilt thou praise him. Teach us to learn, help us to sing, thy song. Send the Spirit of love and harmony into our hearts, that we may learn the strains of the angelic choirs. That Spirit animates the redeemed before the throne, and inspires the redeemed before the footstool; the song is one; the leader Christ; the singers brethren; discord is for ever fled:

> "Then jointly all the harpers round,
> In mind unite, with solemn sound,
> And strokes upon the highest string,
> Make all the heavenly arches ring.
> Ring loud with hallelujahs high,
> To him that sent his Son to die,
> And to the worthy Lamb of God,
> That loved and washed them in his blood."

The "congregation" spoken of in this verse is explained by the apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews. He quotes this passage, and applies it to the Church, "For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee," Heb. ii. 11, 12.

What a view does this present to our minds! Christ looks from the cross to the Church. The gratitude of his heart is to be uttered in the assembly of his saints. "Where two or three are met together in his name, there is he in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 20. He puts his own Spirit within them, that they may participate in his sentiments. As he entered bodily into the room, where his disciples were assembled, so is he spiritually, but really, present, in every company of his faithful people. He meets with them; he blesses them while they are blessing God. When they pray for his Spirit, he hears them, and while they are yet speaking, he sends him into their hearts. The petitions which they offer, he presents to his Father in his own name; he has a full right to do so, for he makes one in the midst of their assembly. As the elder brother of every sincere worshipper, all the prayers and praises ascend in his name. Christ came to glorify the Father, the Spirit comes to glorify the Son, and the sanctification of the Church is the glory of the Spirit. The three Persons of the Godhead obtain the triple honour of creation, redemption, and sanctification. The Church is the object of threefold love, and care, and power. It is to the Church that Christ declares the name of the Father. He reveals it by the instrumentality of his written word, and of his faithful ministers. He gathered his disciples one by one around him; he instructed them how to regard God, and how to address him as a Father. He had but small companies of twelve, and seventy, and one hundred and twenty, who stedfastly attended his personal ministry. To them he declared this name of God, and told them to proclaim it to others. For this purpose he endued them with power from on high, and immediately three thousand souls were added to the number of his professed worshippers. From that time, the churches walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, Acts ix. 31. At the present day they are found in every quarter of the earth. The promise that was made to the first small company, shall not fail to sustain and comfort the last, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Time shall fail, but not Christ's promises. The end of the world, but not of his word, shall arrive. He will be better than his word, he will be with them also throughout eternity. "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth," Christ rejoices more in the habitable hearts. He seeks to dwell in men by his Spirit. We are individually "temples;" collectively, "a temple." Jesus is our High Priest. He prays in us, he prays with us, he prays for us, he prays by us. His praises ascend with ours; he inspires us with his own gratitude, and expresses by our lips, his heartfelt thanksgivings. The self-containing and mysterious name, "I am that I am," he explains to mean, "God is love." Having cleansed the temple of our hearts from fear and selfishness, by this explanation written in his own blood, he sits in the midst of our concentrated affections, and praises God with us in our closet. When congregations assemble, he condescends to meet with them. Where his members are, there is their Head present. Though unseen by them, he is in their midst. His Spirit animates their hearts; in their psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, he praises the great Deliverer—his Father and their Father, his God and their God!

Gratitude is a noble and generous sentiment! It elevates man above the beasts that perish; unites him to the superior intelligence; and, as it were, repays the benefactor with an acceptable interest. Gratitude is one of the fairest plants in the garden of the heart. It is the sun-flower of the soul. Roused by the first gift of light, it follows the whole course of the solar orb. With drooping head it mourns his absence, and with upraised gratitude welcomes his return. Let this be the emblem of our souls. The Christian's heart should blossom with perpetual gratitude. Looking unto Jesus with glowing feelings, we should mark his course, and follow it with thankfulness. Shall he declare to us the paternal name by which we may address Jehovah, and shall we not cry Abba, Father, with all the love and gratitude of which our hearts are capable?

But this verse sets before us a far higher gratitude than that of the Church; it testifies that of Christ the Head. "I will declare thy name. In the midst of the congregation I will praise thee." Oh how we wonder with great admiration at the gratitude of Christ! He is God over all; "I and my Father are one." "Without him was not any thing made that was made." Yet he gives thanks for all things, and gratefully acknowledges that bounty and goodness which supplies himself and others. "He took the seven loaves and gave thanks," Mark viii. 6. He stood at the grave of Lazarus, and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me," John xi. 41. When the seventy disciples returned to him, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," Luke x. 21. Likewise after supper, when he instituted the memorial of his dying love, he gave thanks before them all. Jesus had a grateful heart. Gratitude is an ingredient in perfect love. We are grateful for being loved. Christ taught us the NAME he loved, that we might love it also. God's various names declare what he is in himself, and what he is to us. It is of great importance by what name we most usually think of God. Those who commonly speak of him only as the Almighty, are generally destitute of near, lively, and realizing views of his love in Christ, and of his paternal character. Of all the scriptural names of God, that of "*Father*" is the most precious. Christ taught his disciples, saying, "When ye pray, say, *Our Father*." "I find an indescribable delight in using these words, '*Our Father*;' and, in praising, confessing, and praying for myself, as one of his large family, I generally begin with the thanks due to God for having made himself known as our Father."*

All the other titles and attributes of God seem to meet in this name, as in a centre, and to emanate from it with illustrious rays. It is a most simple, yet all-comprehensive name. There is also another which we would notice, because it is not peculiar to one, but applicable to all the Persons in the sacred Trinity. That name is JEHOVAH.

"When the Lord speaks of himself with regard to his creatures, and especially his people, he calls himself 'Jehovah—I am that I am,' Exodus iii. 14. We should understand this of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of God the Holy Ghost, One God. He does not say, I am their light, their life, their tower, their strength, but only *I am*. He sets his hand, as it were, to a blank, that his people may write under it what they please, that is for their good. As if he should say, 'Are they weak? *I am* strength. Are they sick? *I am* health. Are they in trouble? *I am* comfort. Are they poor? *I am* riches. Are they dying? *I am* life. Have they nothing? *I am* all things. *I am* justice and mercy. *I am* grace and goodness. *I am* glory, beauty, holiness, eminency, supremacy, perfection, all-sufficiency, eternity, JEHOVAH. I AM whatsoever is suitable to their nature, or convenient for them in their several conditions. I AM whatsoever is amiable in itself, or desirable to their souls. Whatever is pure and holy—whatever is great and pleasant—whatever is good, and needful to make them happy, that I AM.' So that, in short, God here represents himself unto us as one universal good; and leaves us to make the application to ourselves, according to our several wants, capacities, and desires; he saying only in the general—I AM."* Well, therefore, may the Psalmist exclaim, "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah, (or Jehovah,) and rejoice before him," Psa. lxviii. 3, 4.

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* "Memoir of Miss Jane Graham."

* Bishop Beveridge.

THE INVITATION.

Verse 23.—*Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.*

Having expressed his own grateful determination; having given utterance to the fulness of that dutiful love which occupied his own heart; the Redeemer next calls on others to join in blessing the Father of all mercies. How natural is this! The true lover longs to hear others praising the object of his affections. Who are these others? They are the members of his Church, that "congregation" in the midst of which he delights to dwell. They are divided into three companies. The fearers of the Lord, the seed of Jacob, and the seed of Israel. Appropriate parts in the great anthem of praise are assigned to each. The fearers of the Lord are invited to praise him. The seed of Jacob to glorify him; and the seed of Israel, to fear, that is, to reverence, the Lord.

These three companies are all one in Christ. They represent his people on earth, in three stages of advancement. That none may imagine themselves to be excluded, they are each particularly addressed, and severally invited to join the Saviour's song of grateful adoration.

First, those who fear the Lord are addressed. This is a striking characteristic of all those who have experienced even the least degree of true religion. All disciples are not equally advanced, but all are distinguished from the world around them by this peculiarity. They fear the Lord; they know that he is every where present; they believe that he takes notice of all they think, and say, and do. They know him by these names, "The Almighty," "The great and terrible God." They generally speak in such terms as these, "The Divine Being, the Deity, the Supreme Ruler of the universe, the Judge of all;" or with this addition, "Our Creator, Our Merciful Preserver." Knowing so much of the Sacred Name, they stand in awe, sometimes their fear amounts almost to dread. Occasionally it is softened into a milder sentiment.

To fear the Lord, is a lesson with which every disciple must be familiar. It is the first in the school of Christ. All need not be learning it, but all must know it by heart. Advanced scholars go on to higher lessons, but they must never forget this first rudiment of spiritual knowledge. Where is it taught? Only in the school of Christ. There the true light is shining, and all without is darkness. When any man enters this school, his previous attainments are disregarded; he is set to learn the alphabet of his nature in the light of eternity. To his horror, he perceives that the entire alphabet is black, and all the letters different in size and form; he learns that his whole nature is corrupt, that almost all the actions of his life are curved and crooked, while even the straightest of them are black, dotted, or crossed. Unaccustomed to such instructions, he is slow to learn them, blots his primer with his tears, and dreads every word and movement of his Teacher. God appears to him to be rigid and severe; he looks up to him only at intervals, and that with dread; he feels unable to approach him with filial confidence, but yet he is persuaded and determined to learn the lessons; he hears of the progress of others, and is encouraged to diligent application. Thus is it with many of the first class in the very earliest stage of their spiritual life. An appropriate duty is set before them. They are encouraged to praise their Teacher. Instead of regarding him with feelings of apprehension, and speaking of him as a severe master, they are told to praise him for all the trouble, care, and attention, he is bestowing upon them. O ye trembling Christians, let all you know of God be turned into matter of praise; you shall thus be strengthened in your hearts, and enlarged in your confidence towards him. Be not cast down when your sense of proficiency is small, as if you never should learn; but make a right use of the little you have acquired, and you shall soon advance to higher lessons. All true Christians set apart special times for prayer. They would find it good also to have special seasons for praise. Adoration and thanksgiving do not, in general, bear an adequate proportion to the petitionary part of our worship.

This world has been compared to a music book, divided by empty spaces and black lines, yet on each of these there is a note, and he must sing who learns it. Praise God, then, as your Creator; praise him as your Preserver; praise him as the Almighty; praise him as the just and righteous Lord; praise him as the supreme Ruler and Governor of all things. If God appear to your apprehension only as great and terrible, yet praise him as such, and his terribleness shall not make you afraid. It is because you do not praise as you proceed, that your progress in heavenly knowledge is so slow. He who thanks God for what little he has learned, shall surely be taught more. A grateful heart makes us active and improving servants. He that doeth his will shall know of the doctrine, John vii. 17; shall be instructed in all wisdom. Ye timid Christians, deprive not the Lord of the honour due unto his name. While you mourn over your sins, praise him who has taught you to hate them; be afraid of being lost, and praise him that you are not lost already; look upon yourself as nothing, and praise him who gave Christ to be your all in all; think little of your own prayers and resolutions, and praise him who came to pray and intercede on your behalf. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him. If you cannot praise him for what you are, thank him for what you are not—that you are not blind, and deaf, and dead, in soul and body both; that you are not as careless and worldly-minded, and fond of sin, as you were before. Should fears and doubts, however, so harass your spirit, that you cannot praise God on your own account, rouse yourself to praise him for what he has done for others. Praise him for the deliverance vouchsafed to your Lord and Saviour on the cross, and for that glorious work which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead; praise him for all that he has done in the Church—his acts of grace in apostles, prophets, and martyrs of old time; and in sin-denying, holy-living, Christians in the world around you; praise him for the Scriptures of truth; the means of grace; the hope, however faint, of salvation. Let every fearer of the Lord thus endeavour to occupy his thoughts with subjects of praise, and he shall soon advance to higher strains, even to the glorifying of God's great name.

Such are the seed of Jacob; these are scholars whom the law, as a schoolmaster, has brought unto Christ; these are they who lay hold on the heel, the bruised heel, of their elder Brother. Jacob, strictly signifies, the heeler; that is, one who lays hold upon the heel, and gains an advantage by another's fall. Jacob did so when he was born; it was his first act, therefore he was named Jacob, Gen. xxv. 26. So is it with some Christians in their new spiritual birth; they are enabled by the Spirit of God to lay hold at once of the bruised heel of their elder Brother, and through his fall and humiliation, rise to hope and heaven; they have no consciousness of spiritual existence, but what is connected with the knowledge of a crucified Redeemer; they learn the first, in the second, lesson; they feel a fear, and a love, of God, springing up in their hearts at one and the same moment; they cannot say that they have experienced all those fears and apprehensions of which others speak; but yet they have learned the name of God in Christ, and are satisfied; they are glad they praise the Lord, yea, they glorify him. Stirred up by a powerful gratitude, they seek to spend and to be spent in his service; they cannot think enough of his goodness; they cannot speak enough of his love; they cannot do enough in his service; they occupy their thoughts in heavenly meditations; they speak often one to another, and their hearts burn with holy love and gratitude to God. That day they regard as lost, which does not witness some labour of love, some act of charity, for his name's sake.

Such are the seed of Jacob. We have described them thus when their "first love," Rev. ii. 4, is fresh and full; but yet, it may be, that after a while they shall experience the life of their father Jacob; they may have to wander far, and be exposed to trials; before some of these, they may fall, to show them their own weakness; over others, they may be carried harmless, to teach them the strength of him who bears them. But as they journey on, it will be their principal desire to glorify God; the main bent of their minds will be to honour his holy name; they will vow to be faithful servants unto death; the Lord shall be their God whithersoever they may be led; the gods of the people amongst whom they come shall not receive the homage of their hearts. Should Providence bring them into a lower capacity, so that their lot be to serve others, yet will they so strive to glorify God in all their conduct, that when about to depart, their superiors may have reason to desire their continuance, and to add, " For we have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed us for your sake," Gen. xxx. 27. Again, through the kindness of the Most High, should they be blessed abundantly on every side, so that all that they have is multiplied, they will glorify the Lord in it all, and say, " We are not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servants," Gen. xxxii. 10.

Thus, throughout their whole life, the true seed of Jacob will glorify the Lord. Here they are invited to do so, and they willingly comply. Is not our God worthy to be honoured and extolled? Did he not give his own Son out of his bosom, to an ignominious and painful death, that they might never die? Will they not therefore glorify him? When that Son was dying on the cross, did he not hear his cry and answer his petition—accepting the Surety for the sinner? Will they not therefore glorify him? Hear how the Saviour encouraged his followers to do so, " Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples," John xv. 8. Will the servant disobey the master? Surely he would not willingly offend. He will seek to abound in services of love; nor will he ever be contented with himself, till he have testified his inward gratitude by his outward obedience. The true seed of Jacob is not one that is satisfied with the religion of the head, or of the lip. He seeks to possess that of the heart, and of the life. His is not a sentimental, but a practical, piety. It evaporates not in warm emotions, or flowing words, but proves its vitality by act and deed. He has learned that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and the first desire of his heart is to be holy in all manner of conversation. He knows that he cannot prove his love to God, but by his love to man, and therefore is ready both to do, and to give, for the benefit of his neighbour. He thus proves himself to be the true disciple of him, who glorified God, by going about continually doing good. Nor does he secretly exult in his own goodness, or build on his own righteousness. He knows that before a perfect God, no work of an imperfect being can merit acceptance; and that, by the perfect law, it must be condemned. Therefore, having no right in himself to the inheritance, like one of the true seed of Jacob, he takes hold of his Elder Brother; he lays his hand on that bruised heel, the humanity of Christ crucified, Gen. iii. 15. Nor will he let go his hold. It is his life. He takes all his righteousness from him. He obtains the blessing, the inheritance, from that elder brother, not an Esau who curses, but a Jesus who blesses.

How shall we further describe the true Christian? Is not his private life spent in prayer? His public life, is it not one of conformity to the pattern of Christ? His eye is more strict to watch the movements of his own heart, than to scrutinize the motives of the hearts of others. He knows his own shortcomings are many, and does not enlarge on the failings of his neighbours. Yet to their *sins*, he is not blind, as to his own he is not partial. Words of love and faithfulness are not so unaccustomed to his tongue, as are those of flattery and praise. He loves his friends, and therefore desires to see them free from every fault. While others are talking at a neighbour's back, he is expostulating with him face to face. He silences the scandalous, by refusing to take up their report; or confounds their faces, by demanding their authority for its truth. His maxim is not to please himself, but to glorify his God. When surrounded by trials, when placed in circumstances of painful perplexity, when apparently about to lose all that is most dear to him in life, he does not trust in his own prudence, or lean on his own strength, but after having done all, and while doing all, that man can do, he trusts only in the unerring wisdom, the sustaining power, and unfailing resources, of a covenant God, on whose love in Christ he casts his burden. If his petitions do not immediately succeed, he does not faint, he cries again and again. The closet of prayer is his field of spiritual combat. He wrestles on in earnestness of supplication, Hosea xii. 3—6. He follows the Lord with importunity of spirit, and because it is the glory of God which he desires, he will not allow himself to be denied. He brings forth strong arguments, and like his father of old exclaims, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Thus he prevails with God, and obtains a new name, becoming henceforth one of the seed of Israel. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," Gen. xxxii. 28.

The seed of Israel are called upon to "fear," that is, to reverence the Lord. The word rendered "fear" in the first part of the verse, is not the same with that, which is so translated in this last clause. The former means to be afraid; it denotes timidity, anxiety of apprehension, dread. The latter signifies to reverence, to regard with respect, to hold in veneration and esteem. It is used to denote that sentiment, with which an inferior should regard a superior. The word *reverence* is the most appropriate in this place. The original term is likewise employed to express a high degree of fear or terror, but generally when arising from a sense of superior force, power, or greatness. As applied here to the seed of Israel, it is remarkably appropriate. Let all such ponder the duty which it enjoins, for the evil against which it guards them is of an insidious nature. Reverence God; "Be not high-minded, but fear." Boast not—thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you." These New Testament warnings are similar to that of the text. They are addressed to those who are supposed to know by experience, the power of believing prayer. They have prevailed with God, let them not presume. They have obtained a new name, let them guard against spiritual pride. When Jacob had wrestled and prevailed with the angel of the covenant, he might have felt tempted to think highly of himself. This great condescension of God towards him, might beget, through the suggestions of Satan, low thoughts of heavenly power, and lofty ideas of his own. Thus, that holy awe and reverence, which ought to characterize every creature, when thinking, and speaking, of the God of heaven, might be destroyed. That lowliness, that abasement of spirit, that renunciation of our own will in prayer, which Christ himself exhibited, might be displaced by sentiments of an opposite nature. Jacob might have conceived that it was rather his own power that prevailed, than the intentional and amazing, condescension of God that yielded. On succeeding occasions, he might approach the throne of grace, more as a prince, than as a supplicant. His prayer might partake more of the nature of a demand, than of a request. And, with an irreverent familiarity, he might now address that great and glorious Being, for whom before he entertained a holy awe. To this surnamed Israel we would say, "Shrink back." To all his seed, Christ here says, "*Reverence God*,"—mildly couching his command under the form of an invitation to join his eucharistic song. The Lord Jesus is our Israel, of whom Jacob was the type. He, too, has prevailed with God; but he diminished not by one iota, that holy reverence with which he regarded his Father. The saints in heaven have all more or less prevailed, Heb. xi. 33, 34; yet there, they cast their crowns in humble abasement at his feet.

Let all the seed of Israel, then, revere their God. As they must not overlook the Godhead of Christ, in his manhood, so let them not forget the condescension of the Hearer of prayer, in their own victories by prayer. How grievous is it, that men should address their heavenly Father in terms of earthly friendship and familiarity; should mistake the vociferations of over-wrought feeling, for the wrestlings of true faith; and substitute a long and loud supplication, for a child-like waiting upon God! Alas, that any disciples of Christ should act like the priests of Baal! Unhappy men! they leap and cry aloud after their manner! Their god is talking, or pursuing, or on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. But our God is the living God, the all-present King: emphatically denominated "*The Hearer of prayer*," in contrast to the deaf and dumb gods of the heathen nations. Why, then, should professing Christians act towards their Lord as if he were no better than these? Why should they shout, as though God were unable or unwilling to hear, "fatiguing Heaven with the prodigious clamour of their outrageous entreaty?" Let it not be so with the seed of Israel. Well meaning, but mistaken Christians, have fallen into this snare, in every age. A caution, therefore, on this point, is highly necessary at all times, and to all classes of persons. Of all these three classes of professing Christians, none require to be more on their guard than the last. To live in the fear of God, or to be self-denying and diligent in glorifying his name, are not the paths in which mere professors, or designing hypocrites, love to walk. Men seldom put on any appearance, but that which is most attractive. A specious profession, a mouth that maketh much love, and a frequent use of peculiar words and phrases, high-sounding names and titles, are the things they lay hold of in religion. They have enlisted to wear the uniform, but not to fight the battles, of the soldiers of the cross. They call themselves the seed of Israel, princes among common Christians, and favourites of Heaven. But it is not he that commendeth himself that is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth, 2 Cor. x. 18. The Israelite indeed is a man without guile, John i. 47. He seeks not the approbation of men, but strives to commend himself in all things to God. He has fully, and experimentally, learned the various lessons of the school of Christ. He fears the Lord in his inmost heart. He glorifies the Lord in his outward conduct. He reverences the Lord with the most sacred sentiments of his soul. The first petition in his prayer invariably is, "*Hallowed be thy name.*" When an answer is vouchsafed to his entreaties, his language is not, "I have prevailed," but simply and humbly, "Thou hast heard me." If, naturally, of an ardent spirit, he strives to keep it in check; and remembers that so long as he is in the body, he requires to be most upon his guard, when most conscious of the love and approbation of his Lord. Peter had no sooner obtained a blessing, than he brought himself under a rebuke. Let us, with John, even though leaning on our Lord's bosom, always address him with REVERENTIAL LOVE. This is the highest, and most blessed, state of feeling to which we can attain. It is that of the Redeemed above; it is that of Christ upon the cross; it is that to which he here invites us; it is that which we shall possess in the eternal world of glory —LOVE, bounded by no sentiment, but that of reverence;—REVERENCE, adorned and actuated by a love as boundless as it shall be everlasting.

THE TESTIMONY.

Verse 24.—*For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him. But when he cried unto him he heard.*

When the Scriptures call to the performance of duty, they present us at the same time with a suitable and adequate reason. Here is an instance. The three classes of the Master's scholars had been invited to join him in praising God, and a powerful reason is added, drawn from his experience of God's faithfulness. He bears his testimony on the Lord's behalf. He seems to place himself in the position of the Psalmist, when he says, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul," Psa. lxvi. 17. Christ had cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" He had complained to his Father that his distress was unnoticed, that his cries were unheard. But he testifies his goodness; records his clemency, his mercy, and his love; and excites his Church's gratitude and praise by this encouraging reason, for God "hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard."

What a direct refutation does this give to all the taunts and accusations of his crucifiers! They had insinuated that God would not have him, that he had no delight in him. But here Christ testifies, "God has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted." They had said that God would not listen to his prayers, but here

Christ declares, "When I cried unto him, he heard." And lest his own cry of God's desertion, and forsaking, should afflict the minds of his disciples, he further decidedly asserts, "God hath not hid his face from me." Comforting assurance! Christ descended not into the tomb under the hiding of his Father's face. The darkness was over all the land only "until the ninth hour." Then the light returned; and, with the material, came also the spiritual light. The one relieved the face of nature, the other relieved the heart of Christ. It relieves our hearts also. It comforts us to know, that the ever-blessed Redeemer died in a calm of soul, and that before he left this life he was able to declare that his Father's face was turned to him in love. Forsaking was strictly a judicial act. It was the act of a just and righteous Judge. But there was no change in the heart of the Father, towards his well-beloved Son. The bosom of love still yearned towards him, though the countenance of love was turned away. Why was it averted? Because the eye met sin; that thing which God cannot look upon without abhorrence, was laid on Christ. Therefore was the countenance of the Father withdrawn. For this reason, and this reason only, was the Holy One forsaken. With all the emphasis of which language is capable, let it be declared that there was no abhorrence of the Bearer, but only of the burden. Let this distinction be fully borne in mind. Let it be ever before our thoughts, bright with the light of eternal truth —God could not but abhor the one; God could not abhor the other. This was all purity, all righteousness. That was all vile, all repulsive. Had a mere man borne the sins of the world, both burden and bearer must have been objects of the Divine wrath. But in the case of Christ, it could be the burden only. Yet because he took it up, and was in the eye of the law cov ered with imputed sin, the light of God's countenance was for a time turned away. Under this judicial desertion, Christ fixed his faith and hope, not on the countenance of the Judge, but on the heart of the Father. Had that been turned away, there could be nothing to trust in. This is, therefore, an important distinction, both as regards Christ our Master and ourselves. It teaches us, in the darkest trial, to know where our strength lies. It furnishes us with food of an imperishable faith. It shows how Christ prayed, and how, as the great Advocate, he prevailed. It admits us within the veil, and unfolds how the anchor is both sure and stedfast. It presents Christ himself, safely passed through an awful storm by its unyielding hold. That anchor is the *loving-kindness* of Jehovah, which takes sure hold by the promise on the one side, and the oath of God on the other. Thus, our Lord on the cross, and all who have fled to it for refuge, found strong consolation by these two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 17—20. Let it therefore be deeply impressed upon your hearts, that God is love; while he loves not your sin, yet be persuaded that he loves your soul. Keep this distinction plainly before your mind. The apostle exhorts you to do so. He says, "Faint not when thou art rebuked of him, for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," Heb. xii. 5. Let your adversities, therefore, teach you a better lesson than your prosperities can possibly render. Let them be tokens to you of the love that dwells in the heart of God. Though you can perceive nothing but the uplifted rod, yet believe that the hand that wields it is your Father's, and that his heart towards you is love. Thus shall you be comforted in trouble, strengthened in weakness, and rendered victorious over every temptation. Thus shall you be like your Lord. Thus shall you be able, in time and in eternity, to bear your feeble, but unfaltering, testimony, to the faithfulness of Jehovah, and to call on all around you to join your hymn of thanksgiving; saying, for God "hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard."

The intention of all, even the severest, trials is to glorify God. During their continuance they are indeed grievous. One hour of pain appears longer than a day, and a whole day of joy passes like an hour. This shows how erroneous all judgment founded on appearances must be. In providential dispensations, God often *appears* to be rather an enemy than a friend. At such seasons, then, remember that it is said in the Proverbs, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful," xxvii. 6. Let these very wounds, under which you smart, be proofs to you that God *is* a friend, and not an enemy. Seek not, then, to exchange your gifts for deceitful gratifications. The more severe the trial is, the greater is the opportunity afforded you to glorify God. The worst of all sorrows, deprivation of his comforting presence, puts you in a situation to prove that you love the Lord for himself alone, and not for a selfish end: this honours God, and confounds Satan, Job i. 9. Still confide, then, in God's power and willingness to grant desired relief. Faith in the love and willingness of a heavenly Father, is the stay of the oppressed heart; it imparts strength to prayer, and life to intercession. Therefore, to unsettle our minds in regard to the love of God, is the great aim of the adversary of the soul. It is a fundamental doctrine of holy Scripture, that God smites in love; we are told to receive his chastisements as means intended for our good. All inflictions are certainly rods of wrath, but it is wrath springing from love. To those who are "new creatures" in Christ

Jesus, these afflictions are, moreover, proofs of *paternal* affection, showing that "God dealeth with them as with sons;" but in reference to human beings, still out of torment, or who are not judicially abandoned by the Spirit of grace, all afflictions are intended either for their temporal or eternal good; and can only fail by their resistance to the grace of God. The last pang which dying nature feels is the infliction of a God, whose longsuffering mercy is come to an end, or whose work of grace in the furnace is completed.

Throughout the whole of life, by daily preservation, the bounties of nature, and constant occasions of gladness, there is unceasing testimony given to men of the love and goodness of their Creator. The things that are seen—the flowing rivers, the boundless ocean, the spangled heavens, the verdant landscape, the majestic mountains, the animal creation, wild and tame, testify his eternal power and Godhead, his beneficence and love. Thus man is without excuse. And though there be a thorn with every rose, it is love still, goodness still. The flower is uppermost, nearest, most inviting; its fragrance ascends upwards, and diffuses itself around; the sweet voice of its breathing teaches man's heart to rise with thankfulness to God; but if the ungrateful mortal grovel still with downward eye and hand, it is kind to prick him for his earthliness. Were the thorn placed where the rose is; were it as large and many-edged as are its petals; were it as tempting in colour, inviting in fragrance, and still as sharp and piercing in itself, we might well imagine with the heathen, that the earth was made by an evil spirit, who delights in the misfortunes and miseries of his creatures. But it is not so. The book of nature teaches by every leaf, that "God is love." The Book of Revelation twice declares in a single chapter "God is love; God is love," 1 John iv. 8, 16.

Many are the proofs of this truth, which Nature, Scripture, and our own experience furnish. The answering of prayer is not the least of the believer's testimonies that God is love. When, like the Psalmist, we have approached the throne of grace in sorrow of heart and depression of spirit, how often have we risen from our knees with relieved and grateful feelings! The gracious Friend of sinners has exchanged his yoke with us for ours. Weary and heavy laden, we go to him and find rest. How easy is his yoke to the neck, how light his burden to the shoulder! Matt. xi. 28, 30. It is a yoke of love, a burden of joy! Prayer puts our burden upon Christ, and ourselves under his yoke. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles," Psa. xxxiv. 6. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live," Psa. cxvi. 1, 2. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. But verily God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me," Psa. lxvi. 16—20.

Is the Christian, then, surrounded by trial? Is he overwhelmed? Does he seem to be cast out of God's sight, and feel as though far off from his presence? Prayer will bring him nigh. Prayer will effect his complete deliverance. But it must be true prayer. It must be an earnest appeal of our hearts to the heart of God, through Jesus Christ. "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord," Isa. xxix. 13,

14. Is the Christian, then, under the dark cloud of temporal or spiritual trial? Has the nearest and dearest object of his heart been removed out of his sight by the relentless hand of death? Do lingering sickness and disease detain him in yearly endurance? Or is poverty, and its attendant evils, come upon him with its iron grasp? Prayer will bring the Comforter, the Physician, the Omnipotent, to his aid; for, whatever be his circumstances, this is the scriptural exhortation, "Trust in him at ALL TIMES: ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us," Psa. lxii. 8. Let him therefore say, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me," Isa. xxxviii. 14. "Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I;" Psa. lxi. 1, 2. The Lord will not despise his supplication. It is positively declared, in reference to prayer, "the Lord upbraideth not," James i. 5. Persuasion of the Lord's willingness to hear, and tenderness of consideration, enlarges our hearts in prayer before him. The psalmist knew this, and said, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come," Psa. lxv. 2. Yes, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," Rom. x. 13. "God never said to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain," Isa. xlv. 19. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy," James v. 11. Men are often brought low by their own iniquity, nevertheless God regards their affliction, when he hears their cry, Psa. cvi. 44. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," Psa. li. 17. The heart of our blessed Lord was broken on the cross, but there also it was healed. Though his Father had not for a time attended to his prayer, he had never *despised* it; though he abhorred the burden which Jesus had taken upon him, he had never *abhorred* the *afflic-*

tion of its afflicted Bearer. Though he hid his *face* from him as a Judge, he shut not his *heart* against him as a Father, but when he cried unto him he heard. We may therefore apply to Jesus on the cross, what is spoken by the prophet, in the name of the Lord, to the afflicted Church, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee," Isa. liv. 7, 8.

THE VOW.

VERSE 25.—*My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*

THE joy and gratitude of our adorable Lord rise to such a height at this great deliverance—his heart so overflows with fresh and blessed consciousness of his heavenly Father's nearness, that he again pours forth the expression of his praise. By its repetition, he teaches us that this is not a temporary burst of gratitude, but an abiding determination, a full and settled resolution. He puts it, like the preceding twenty-second verse, into the form of a vow, but carries forward his thoughts to a higher and eternal object, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation."

The "great congregation" is a phrase taken from the assembling of the tribes, from all parts of the land of Israel, 1 Kings viii. 65. At such seasons, our blessed Lord was ever ready to fulfil his high commission. In the synagogues of the different places to which he came, and in the Temple when he arrived, did our Saviour proclaim to the assembled multitudes, the acceptable year of the Lord. We may fully apply to him the words of the Psalmist, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart! I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation," Psa. xl. 9, 10. In the gospel of St. John our adorable Redeemer is exhibited before our eyes, as in a moral picture, in the very act which the Psalmist here foretells, "In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified,") John vii. 37—39.

The earthly Jerusalem and Temple were typical of heaven, and its worshipping hosts, Heb. ix. 9. The apostle thus explains it, and says, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all," Gal. iv. 26. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, he represents the once crucified, but ever exalted, Saviour, as entered into the holy place of a greater and more perfect temple—standing there as a mediator, and presenting the blood of sprinkling in fulfilment of his vow. The twenty-second verse of this psalm informed us, that in the midst of the Church, while it continues militant on earth, Christ will praise his Father: and here we are assured that in heaven itself, in the general assembly and Church of the first-born, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, his praises shall be heard, and his vows be performed. Heb. ix. 24; xii. 22—24.

No sooner was this promise made, than it was accomplished. In a few seconds after the period at which we conceive that our Lord inwardly repeated this verse, he performed his vow, and breathed out his spirit into the hands of his Father. Then the soul of Jesus entered into the world of spirits; there in the presence of the redeemed, and of all the listening angels, did he present his praises to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. Shortly after, also, did the soul of the penitent malefactor appear in Paradise, to add his joyful praises to their grateful notes.

The faithful Redeemer is still fulfilling his vows in the experience of every believer. He carries on his intercession in heaven, and he sends down his Spirit on earth. The good Shepherd still careth for his sheep, and assures our hearts of his love, by declaring to us his duty, " As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do," John xii. 49; xiv. 31. And he is still " doing" at the court of heaven all that is needful for his Church. The souls of the redeemed, are now beholding how faithfully he there discharges his " commanded duty," as High Priest and Advocate, on behalf of their brethren who are still on the earth.

The " great congregation" in which our Lord vows to offer high praises to Jehovah, signifies, in its fullest sense, that assembly in which the whole company of the redeemed shall meet, and be united for ever. A great congregation, indeed, shall then assemble, from Abel, the first soul that was saved, to the last man of God's elect, who shall be snatched from off this burning world. Then, and there, will Christ pay his vows. These vows are, that he would fulfil all the Father's will, and that he would lose none of those whom the Father should give to him. These vows are, that he, as the head, and that the redeemed, as the members of his body, should give praise and glory to God, in place of all that shame and dishonour which the first Adam and his posterity had wrought. With all the glorious company of his redeemed, shall the once despised Jesus of Nazareth stand forth, the admiration of angels, and give utterance to those praises which the brief period of time shall supply to awaken the echoes of eternity!

He will pay his vows before them that " fear him." As this term includes *all* his people, so it assures those timid, but sincere Christians, who, though not ashamed to confess his name, are yet afraid to appropriate his promises, that they shall not be left out. None shall be lost. Christ as their head, as the Father of the everlasting age, Isa. ix. 6, shall present himself, and all who have truly loved him, before the throne, and say, Behold me, and the children thou has given me, Heb. ii. 13.

Such we may conceive to be, in part, the fulfilment of the Saviour's vows, at the period of his everlasting glory. To place, beyond all doubt, the integrity of his purpose, he has not left one unfulfilled, in the progress of his earthly humiliation. To the most minute particular of his Father's will, did our Lord attend with scrupulous exactness. And it might be, just at this moment, in harmony with this verse, that our expiring Lord said, "I thirst." Some may consider this to have been uttered in connexion rather with the fifteenth verse, as a proof of the exhaustion of his frame. This may appear to be more natural, but we rather incline to regard it as spoken at this time, in token of his willingness to fulfil all that was required of him. The statement of the evangelist leads us to conclude that these two words, "I thirst," were uttered out of a sense of duty, and with express intention to fulfil all that was written of him. "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst," John xix. 28. Therefore, that not one thing might be left undone, unsuffered, unfulfilled, he said it. He was faithful in all things. His vows were fully performed. To the very last mite, the Surety paid our debt; he drank to the very dregs that cup of suffering which had been prepared for him. Therefore, in imitation of thy example, we thine unworthy disciples shall say, with the strongest and most grateful determination, with our living voice, our dying breath, with our song of time, our hymn of eternity, "Our praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: we will pay our vows before them that fear thee."

Bring home this lesson, Christian reader, to thy heart. Christ made no vow, which he did not perform. How many hast thou uttered, which thou hast never fulfilled? On the bed of sickness, and in the prospect of death; on the stormy deep, in expectation of shipwreck; at the couch of a beloved relative, under fear of bereavement; in the hour of want, distress, and perplexity; how many vows have been sent up to the registry of heaven? When the Father heard your cry, and granted deliverance, how long has he been made to wait for the performance of your promise? Perhaps he is waiting till now. Recollect thyself, God is not to be mocked. When thou makest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools, Eccles. v. 4, who cry out speedily in distress, and laugh when the danger is over. Go back, then, in thy history. Recall the scenes and stages of life, through which thou hast passed. Let not memory be treacherous. Let not conscience be partial. Deal honestly with thyself. There is no unfaithfulness in the Lord, who will surely require of thee thy vows, Deut. xxiii. 21. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?" Eccles. v. 5, 6. "Therefore, be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter' (even mentally) "any thing before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon the earth, therefore let thy words be few," v. 2.

It is a solemn fact, proved in the experience of al ministers, that, on an average, only two or three per sons out of thousands, perform those vows in health, which, with so much earnestness, they had made on the bed of sickness. This is an appalling truth, and casts a dark shade over death-bed repentance. We would discourage none, even at the eleventh hour, from applying to Christ, who will in no wise cast out any who truly turn to him. But the heart is so deceitful, no human being can pronounce an opinion on the truth even of his own repentance, when it is not tested by contact with the world, and its temptations. While on this side of the grave, we must warn all, not to trust on an uncertain basis. Beyond the bourne of life, we follow no man. Human judgment is suspended, when a creature passes into the court of that Judge, who knows the secret state of every heart, and who never pronounces a sentence, in the justice of which the conscience of the criminal himself does not fully acquiesce! If, then, dear reader, thou art putting off thy repentance to another day, be entreated now while it is called to-day. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. To-morrow may be too late. There may be no to-morrow in thy mortal history. If there are vows, O Christian, still unfulfilled, standing against you, confess your sin immediately; cry to the Holy Spirit for strength and integrity of determination; give yourself no rest, till you have discharged the solemn obligations, under which you lie, to glorify God, by fully and daily performing your vows, Psa. lxi. 8; and press forward to a cheerful compliance with the exhortatory invitation of the apostle, "By Jesus, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name," Heb. xiii. 15.

THE SATISFACTION OF THE MEEK.

VERSE 26.—*The meek shall eat and be satisfied.*

THE narrative of the gospel informs us that when our Lord had fulfilled the last prophecy of Scripture relating to his mortal life, and had cried, "I thirst," that one, standing by, held a sponge with vinegar to his mouth. And here we picture to our minds that the Saviour, as if feeling the raging thirst more intensely by this partial relief, turned at once, and for ever, from all earthly supports, as empty and insufficient, and solaced his mind with meditation on the river of God's pleasure again opened to him, and on that refreshing, satisfying, and unfailing water of life, which he would give to his people, with the living bread. So abundant does his own prepared gospel feast appear in contrast with this unsatisfying sip, which he had just received, that he declares, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied."

In these words our Lord describes the character of his disciples, their privilege, and their condition. First, their character is "the meek." The disciple should resemble the Master. The characteristic feature of our blessed Lord was that of meekness. He desires his people to be like-minded. "Learn of me," he says, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. xi. 29. The wisdom of the schools had never inculcated this lesson. When "the Teacher" came, his doctrine was despised as tame and mean. How true is it, "that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto him!" 1 Cor. ii. 14. And how true also is the converse, "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God!" ch. iii. 19. To possess a high and noble spirit, to be able to maintain our dignity, to resent all affronts with effect, and bend before the power of no man, is matter of much importance in the estimation of the world. It is deemed wisdom, strength, and greatness. Some, however, of the ancient philosophers could spurn even this as beneath them. They aspired to the dignity of a perpetual calm, which no wickedness could ruffle, no evils disturb. Their stoical serenity, was an artificial compound of selfishness, pride, and apathy. No such ingredients enter into Christian meekness. It is the meekness of wisdom, James iii. 13; of a wisdom based on a knowledge of self, that humbles; a knowledge of God, that softens; a knowledge of the vanity of time, and the importance of eternity, that abases the soul. This meekness, too, is one of the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 23; it is not a native production of the human heart, in this fallen state. There is a mildness and softness, natural to some men, which have much of the appearance, but may not possess the qualities, of genuine meekness. This shows itself towards all men, Titus iii. 2. It is not gentle before superiors, and tyrannical to inferiors. It walks with "all lowliness;" forces not its opinion upon others or itself before them, Eph. iv. 2. Instead of contending with those that oppose themselves, it sets itself rather to instruct them for their good, 2 Tim. ii. 25. And rather than retain even a just displeasure at offenders, is anxious for their amendment, and willing to restore them to favour, Gal. vi. 1. True meekness has a constant regard to God, yields every thing to his guidance, and murmurs not at the severest of his providential dispensations. A full and perfect example of this virtue was never, but once, exhibited on earth. That example was our Lord. He was invariably meek. Even Moses, the meekest of men, failed in respect of it, and was excluded from Canaan. Yet was he pre-eminent for it above all men that dwelt on the earth, Numb. xii. 3. But so fully, so perfectly, did this virtue exist in Jesus, that when the apostle would exhort the Corinthians to peace and amity with each other, he beseeches them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 1. Meekness is a lovely and useful virtue. It adorns humanity, and renders life pleasant. It is most acceptable to God: "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in his sight of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 4.

Our Lord, therefore, pronounces his benediction on all such, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," Matt. v. 5. They seem now to be outcasts, and others lord it in possession. But the time is at hand when Jehovah "will reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth," Isa. xi. 4, and give them the kingdom in possession.

The meek are the beloved pupils of the great Teacher. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way," Psa. xxv. 9. This is part of the peculiar office to which the Spirit of the Lord anointed him. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek," Isa. lxi. 1. Let us therefore comply with the exhortation of the prophet Zephaniah, that we may exhibit his character before God and men, and enjoy the blessedness connected with it. "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," Zeph. ii. 3.

Secondly, their privilege is set before us. "The meek shall eat." This implies, first, that a supply has been provided for them; secondly, that they are welcome: and thirdly, that they are willing to partake.

First, a supply is provided for them. The Scriptures fully declare this. In various places it is described under the figure of an earthly feast. Our Lord himself uses this parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son; and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage," Matt. xxii. 2—4. The prophets looked forward to it: "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," Isa. xxv. 6. Therefore, also, they cried aloud with an universal invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isa. lv. 1, 2.

Such is the scriptural representation of the gospel of Christ. God first declares, by these figurative terms, the necessity and appropriateness, the sufficiency and freeness, of provided spiritual blessings in Christ; and then invites, and commands, man to come and take whatever he requires. How different is true Christianity in this respect, from all the false religions of the heathen world! How contrary to that perversion of scriptural religion, which is made by every natural heart! Man imagines that he has a great work to perform, before he can draw near to God, and obtain all that is needed for his soul in time and in eternity. He cannot conceive, and will not be persuaded, that God has already made a full supply for him, and that all that he has to do is to receive and eat. It appears to him, that the first advance must be made on his own side. He knows and feels that he is the inferior, nay the offender. He regards God in the same manner in which he would an earthly sovereign, and concludes that it is both right and just, that he should confess his faults, beg for pardon, and sue for a reconciliation. It is indeed just and right that he should do so. But what if the Great King wait not on our tardy return? What if he anticipate us with an ovorflowing kindness?—and come, and stand, and call, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.—Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord," Isa. lv. What shall we say in this case? How shall we act? Surely if it were right that we should turn to the Lord before, it is much more incumbent now, when he so lovingly invites us!

This is exactly what God has done in the gospel. He prepares the feast; he sends the good news of a full and free salvation, and adds, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage," Matt. xxii. 4. He shows us that we are welcome to partake of its blessings—pardon, peace, righteousness, strength, wisdom, sanctification, and everlasting redemption. But man replies, "Though the feast be ready, I am not yet ready to receive it." He is too proud to go as he is—too disobedient to go at once —too suspicious to go without asking questions—too doubtful as to thet erms and sincerity of the invitation, to be convinced that it is really intended for himself. Thus many who have some desire to partake of these blessings, are as effectually deprived of them, by these wilful hinderances, as the others are by their farms, and purchases, and quiet domestic comforts. Where God places no difficulty, they do. They say to themselves, "Since the Saviour has done so much, we must do something." They therefore enter upon a religious course of life. They put aside bad habits, leave off certain sins, and practice the opposite virtues. They attend the means of grace, read the Scriptures, observe regularly all their acts of devotion, private and public. It may be, also, that they use self-denial, weep over their failings, fast, give alms, and practise austerities. But all this, notwithstanding, is spoiled by their inward motive. To obtain reconciliation with God, and to recommend themselves to his mercy, is their great, their avowed object. They think that they must entreat God to be reconciled to them, and will not believe that He is beseeching them to be reconciled to Him, 2 Cor. v. 21. In their view it seems absolutely indispensable, that they should first lead a religious life, for at least some period of time; continue in the daily and hourly practice of Christian virtues; and so recommend themselves to God's approval; and they will not be persuaded that God commendeth his love toward them, in that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them, Rom. v. 8. They imagine that the bestowment of blessings in this free manner, before the religious services are rendered, is the very way to prevent their performance. Now, let it be remarked, that the argument, here, lies not against the services, but against the *motive* from which they spring; and, we may add, that such an objection proceeds on a total misconception of the *object* which God has in view. It is not the mere performance of service, that God looks at. Were this what he desires, then the principle of natural men would be correct, their practice wise, and their success indubitable. But God's heart seeks first, not a religion of service, but a religion of love. He wishes to see, before and around him, not a variety of servants who work for reward, but an assemblage of children, who are actuated by gratitude for what he has already bestowed. We may appeal to their own feelings. Imagine two congregations. The one meets to pray and praise, in order to commend themselves to God, as religious and devout worshippers. The preacher exhorts them to avoid sin, to love righteousness, to practise charity, that they may be able to look back on a well-spent life, and so obtain commendation at the last, from their merciful God and Saviour. He concludes; the people return to their houses, satisfied that they have discharged an incumbent duty. The other congregation meets to pray and praise, in order to testify their gratitude to God for sending his Son to die as their surety, and to obtain a greater likeness to his holy image. The preacher exhorts them to avoid sin, to love righteousness, to practise charity, out of love and gratitude to that Saviour, who bought them with his blood. He tells them that the only well-spent life which God acknowledges, is that of Jesus of Nazareth; that, therefore, they must look back only upon that; and enjoins them to place all their hope of mercy at the last, only on the merit of his righteousness. He concludes; the people return to their houses, saying, "Our best services are unworthy of His acceptance, who so loved us. Let us be more diligent to serve Him, and never cease to praise His name, who bought us with his blood."

Now, we ask, as the services are similar, which motive is noble, generous, and praiseworthy? Who would prefer that their children should be actuated by the former, instead of the latter? Which of these two motives, brings most honour to God? Which of them humbles man? Which of them ensures the most loving obedience? Beyond all doubt, the latter. This, then, is the *object* which God has in view. To implant this motive of love in our hearts, Christ died. To inform us of his death, the Gospel is sent. The feast is furnished; and proofs of God's love towards us are exhibited, that we may be incited to enter cordially into all the services of religion, and may perform all our acts of charity, out of love and gratitude to him. But though men believe, as an article of their creed, that "Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate," yet their knowledge of his death has little or no influence on their affections. Why? Because they believe not in the *motive* that prompted it. They do not think that God really feels a cordial love towards them. They imagine that as we love, only what is good or attractive in its own nature, and cannot entertain any affection towards a repulsive object, so God cannot love them, till they shall have done something to please and serve him, and to prove that they are not undeserving of his favour. Thus they begin from themselves. The reconciliation, they imagine, must commence on their part. The love is to flow upwards, from their hearts, towards the heart of God, and so gain his love. Though the Scriptures plainly declare, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us," 1 John iv. 10; and again, "We love him, because he first loved us," ver. 19; yet will they not be persuaded that their principle is unsound. Why? Because it is too agreeable, and flattering, to be speedily relinquished. God's principle is one, that maintains his own glory, and lowers man. It puts God first, man last. It makes God the generous giver, and man only the receiver, the beggar. But man's principle is quite the reverse. It exalts man, and dishonours God. It sets man first, God second. It allows man to approach God, not as a mere beggar, but with something in his hand to give; and it represents God as withholding his love, and his blessing, till man can produce the price. No wonder, then, that man naturally contends earnestly for a principle, which is so congenial to his own self-complacency! It is difficult to convince him contrary to his own dignity, and in opposition to the principles of his fallen nature! Difficult! It is impossible! Why? Because man is not naturally what this verse describes: he is not meek; his pride makes him spurn the Gospel. Therefore the apostle calls on us all to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls," James i. 21. Of ourselves, we cannot do this. The Spirit of God alone can produce this good fruit in our hearts. We must, therefore, pray to Him to effect this in us. We must pray to Him to cast down all imaginations, and every high thing in us, that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. When the Holy Spirit has thus rendered the heart meek, to receive the words of the gospel, we find that it contains indeed a rich and full supply of spiritual nourishment. The prophet experienced it to be so. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart," Jer. xv. 16. Our Lord says, "The meek shall eat;" the prophet says, "I did eat." As in eating, we make personal use of the food that is set before us, so it is signified here, that we must make a personal application of the gospel. When it invites, we are to accept; when it commands, we are to obey; when it threatens, we are to fear; when it promises, we are to believe; when it encourages, we are to take comfort; and when it examines, we are to say, "Search me, O Lord, and try my heart, and see if there be any wicked way in me," Psa. cxxxix. 3. This is the personal application of gospel truths, which is intended by this metaphor. It is not a carnal eating, like that of the Israelites, Deut. xvi. 11, 14, but spiritual, on the true sacrifice of the Lamb of God. As our Lord when alluding to leaven, meant not that of bread, but of "doctrine," Matt. xvi. 12; so when he says, "I am the bread of life," John vi. 48, he means, that he is the doctrine of life; his doctrine is the bread of the soul. When also he says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," he means, "The doctrine of my taking your nature, is a substantial proof of my love to you, on which your soul may meditate, to gain strength for eternity, as your body feeds on meat, to gain strength for time. And the doctrine of my blood-shedding to remove your guilt, is an ever-living truth, to which your conscience may have recourse in its thirst for forgiveness, as your parched flesh drinks of a flowing fountain for refreshment." This is the doctrine which the Spirit of God must enable us to receive with meekness, that it may save our souls.

"The meek shall eat:" they do eat. They apply it to their own hearts and consciences every day. This is the meat which the world knows not of. Their meat is to do the will of God. His will is, first, that they should believe the doctrine of his love; secondly, that they should love him in return; and thirdly, that from love to him, they should love all men, and go about continually doing good. His will, therefore, they daily study to fulfil. It is their delight. It is their strength, their nourishment, their life. The more they are enabled to fulfil it, the more easy does its performance become, and the higher do their own peace and happiness rise. The more they partake of this heavenly food, the more desirous are they that others should enjoy it, and therefore they thus invite all, " O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him," Psa. xxxiv. 8.

In the third place, this verse describes their condition. It is that of satisfaction, " The meek shall eat and shall be satisfied." The supply that is provided is not only ready, it is full, it is abundant. There is enough, and to spare, for all. Nor is there only a full supply. It is also rich. The quantity exceeds not the quality. The smallest portion is a satisfying portion. It disappoints not the expectation. It imparts a full and most contented feeling to the soul. No one need say, "I must seek something else." How unlike to the portions of this world! They satisfy not. Their abundance clogs, their richness satiates, their variety sickens, their quality dissatisfies. We hasten from one to another, and still seek for only another, which may perhaps afford full satisfaction. This is the universal experience of men, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" Psa. iv. 6. In contrast to these, the meek are taught to say, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us," Psa. iv. 6. This was the satisfying portion which our Lord so earnestly sought when on the cross. This was what he found. This is what he now enjoys. In God's favour is life; at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore. The meek find the fullest satisfaction in that favour now. They shall enjoy it hereafter. It is not only a full and rich, but also an increasing satisfaction, " The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord," Isa. xxix. 19. It is not a satisfaction of an hour, or a day, or a year, but of a life. The relish for it continues, by reason of a constant accession. It decreases not by use. It evaporates not in enjoyment. It is the satisfaction, which the long benighted traveller feels, who perceives the dawn of a light that shall increase to perfect day His satisfaction rises as the sun ascends. Christ is a sun of righteousness to the meek. The first dawn of his light imparts satisfaction to their souls, and every increase of his light gives an addition to their happiness. But not only is it full, and rich, and unalloying, and increasing, it is eternal. The satisfaction of God himself, has become the satisfaction of the heart of man. Christ is its source. God is eternally well pleased with the perfect righteousness of his Son, and his people experience it to be an eternal satisfaction to their souls. They are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, Psa. xxxvi. 9; lxiii. 56. Christ the Lord is their portion. He is unchangeable. Their portion therefore is unchanging, and inexhaustible, their satisfaction perpetual. It shall not cease; it cannot cease. Their satisfaction is that of the heart, eternally resting on the heart of Christ. They believe that he loves them; and though he declares that all he has is theirs, yet do they value his love, infinitely beyond all that he can bestow upon them. The Spirit of Christ has entered into their breasts, and has made them partakers of his joy. The joy of Christ must be eternal, their joy therefore shall be eternal. The satisfaction of Christ is everlasting; therefore their satisfaction must be everlasting. Christ prayed for it on the night on which he was betrayed, "These things I speak, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. I will declare unto them thy name, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them," John xvii. 26.

The meek are satisfied in poverty. Distress and trouble do not impair their peace. When trials overtake them, they are satisfied that God intends them all for good. When temptations assail them, they find a satisfaction in meditating on Christ, who was tempted in all points like as they are, yet without sin. The doctrine of his living, and suffering, like themselves, in human flesh, for their benefit, is "meat indeed," John vi. 55. When, mourning over their many sins, and daily shortcomings, they are made to thirst after a free and full forgiveness, they obtain complete satisfaction by meditating on the Lamb of God, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. This doctrine of his atoning blood is "drink indeed," "They eat," and drink, "in plenty, and are satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord their God, that hath dealt wondrously with them," Joel ii. 26.

Being thus taught by the Spirit to learn of Christ; being thus made meek; being thus enabled to receive the engrafted word; being thus personal partakers of it, as by a spiritual eating; the meek are filled with a free, full, abundant, rich, uncloying, increasing, and eternal satisfaction. It is a satisfaction of conscience, of heart, of judgment; a satisfaction of love, and of enjoyment; a satisfaction in poverty and wealth, in health and sickness, in life and death, in time and throughout eternity.

THE

SEEKERS OF THE LORD

PRAISING HIM.

VERSE 26.—*They shall praise the Lord that seek him.*

THE mind of Christ on the cross, appears to dwell with delight on the thought, that his people shall experience what he himself enjoys. He had now tasted of his Father's goodness, and was satisfied; and it seems to be with gratification that he declares "the meek shall eat and be satisfied." He had also earnestly sought the favour of God, and had given thanks that he had found it; and now he turns from his own joy, to that of his disciples, as if his were not complete without theirs, and says, "They shall praise the Lord that seek him."

It is declared by the Redeemer, "Seek, and ye shall find," Matt. vii. 7. The command is imperative, the promise is faithful. The performance, therefore, ought to be sincere and persevering. "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart," Jer. xxix. 13. The true seeker of God shall become a finder of real joy. He may not now be able to rejoice, but in due time he shall praise the Lord. As it was with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, the seeker may be in anguish of spirit; he may have a most bitter cup to drink; his will may be strong against it, yet will he not faint. Again, and again, and again, will he seek the Lord; and though he may not be able to praise him with joyful lips, yet will he praise him with a submissive heart, and render the substantial praise of obedience. Or again, like Jesus on the cross, the seeker may be so enveloped in darkness, that he may be constrained to cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" yet will he continue to seek, and search, and seek again, with all his heart. He will cry, entreat, beseech, use every argument which wisdom, or necessity, can suggest, and follow up all, by an unceasing importunity of earnestness. Remember you are not alone; you have an all-prevailing Intercessor. Christ had no advocate on his side, yet he persevered till he prevailed. Having, therefore, such an High Priest, you may draw near with boldness. He is worthy of the fullest confidence. Like Christ, too, the seeker shall find, and shall praise the Lord. There is no doubt on this point. The promise is as express as the command. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain," Isa. xlv. 19. The wrestler shall become a prevailer; Jacob shall be named Israel; the beggar shall become a bestower, he gets blessings, and he gives praises. Thus shall it be with every one that seeks the Lord, not only with all his heart, not only perseveringly, but also in the right time. The Scripture addresses every man and says, "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found," Isa. lv. 6. There is a period approaching when it shall be too late. God has limited a certain day, saying in David, "TO-DAY, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," Heb. iv. 7; 2 Cor. vi. 2. Christ wept over Jerusalem, because she let slip the period allotted her. God declares regarding many, "They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me," Prov. i. 28. Let this warning rouse the slothful professor. Let it alarm the careless sinner. Should he inquire, "But how shall I seek the Lord?" we reply, first, by earnest, secret, prayer.

This is a work which cannot be engaged in by any friend in your stead. It is a personal seeking. If your own heart be not engaged in it, you can obtain no blessing. Let secret, earnest, private, prayer, be daily exercised by you; cause constant ejaculations to ascend, wherever you are, and howsoever occupied. Remember, that prayer is the first and most needful part of your duty in seeking the Lord. But neglect not other means. Seek God in his church, in the assembly of his people. Where his word is preached, and spiritual worship ascends, he is present to bless; there fail not to meet your Lord, that you may obtain his blessing. Seek him also by diligent reading of the holy Scriptures, which are as a lamp to guide you to his presence. Seek the Lord by all the means of grace, and ordinances of his appointment, but rest not in the mere use of means. Ask of the Spirit of God to make them helps, otherwise they shall prove hinderances. Above all, and along with all, seek the Lord by faith. Believe that he is willing to reveal himself to you; be persuaded that he is not far from you; that he notices your every inquiry. Believe that he is more willing to hear than you are to pray, more ready to give than you are to ask. Such faith honours God. It prevails. Those who place confidence in God shall never be confounded; "they shall praise the Lord that seek him." In the flesh you shall praise God. You shall find him to be a Father, a Preserver, a Friend, a Saviour, a Comforter. With the fleshly body, all seeking shall be put off. Then the praises of the Lord, which commenced in time, shall increase, shall swell symphonious, and the arches of heaven shall resound with the music of eternal gratitude!

THE ETERNAL LIFE.

VERSE 26.—*Your heart shall live for ever.*

HAVING regarded his people under two of what ought to be their most prominent characteristics, meekness, and seeking of the Lord; having solaced his mind with the consideration of their happiness and their gratitude; their satisfaction with his blessings, and their praises of his heavenly Father for them; our Lord next meditates on their imperishable condition. And to render that thought fruitful of peace, and grace, and strong consolation, to our souls, he graciously expresses it in the form of this affirmative assurance, "Your heart shall live for ever." He does not say, *you* shall live for ever, but your *heart.* He knows that the great majority of his disciples must die, and be laid in the grave. Only an Enoch, in the antediluvian world, and an Elijah, in the time of the prophets, had passed from earth to heaven, without tasting death. A long period of intervening time must elapse, before any similar event should happen. And as, even then, the living saints, who shall be clothed upon with their house from heaven, 2 Cor. v. 2, 4, shall be, comparatively, but a very small part of the whole redeemed family, our Lord in speaking of the eternal and blessed life, uses a term which comprehends them all, and says, "Your heart shall live for ever." We understand it to signify their everlasting spiritual condition. The heart, the new heart, the sanctified soul may be removed from one place to another, as at death, from earth to heaven; but still, its state, its condition, its desires, its feelings, its life, are the same.

"Your heart," that is, not your outward man, but the hidden man of the heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 26; the renewed spirit of the mind; the new man which is created after the image of God, in righteousness, and true holiness, Eph. iv. 23, 24. "The heart," that is, the inward holy feelings and desires; the spirit of love to God and man; that state of mind which is, as it were, the heart of penitence, and prayer, and purity, "shall live for ever." The life which animates it, is the life of the Spirit of God. It is, therefore, a life of union with him, from whom that Spirit comes. It is the life of membership with the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body having nourishment ministered, shall increase with all the increase of God, Col. ii. 19. Therefore Christ said, "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 9. And the apostle, enlarging on the same blessed truth, declares, "Your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 2, 4. This eternal life, then, this living of the heart for ever, is not a mere unending existence. It is not a far off thing, as too many consider it, which is only to be enjoyed in the future state of being. It is a present reality. It is a life begun on earth. It is an actual possession, not merely a future prospect. "He that believeth on me HATH everlasting life," John vi. 47. "He that believeth on me shall NEVER die," John xi. 26. "We know that we HAVE passed," says the apostle, "from death unto life," 1 John iii. 14. If these express statements of holy Scripture be not sufficient to prove that this life has a present, actual, commencement in this state of being, as well as an unceasing continuance in that which is to come; and if any still inquire, What is eternal life? let the Saviour's testimony terminate every doubt, for he says, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. However simple this statement appears to be, yet many are unable to attach a definite idea to the declaration, that eternal life consists in the *knowledge* of God. This arises from not keeping in view the scriptural, and therefore only true, meaning of death and life. Death is separation. Man is an intellectual and moral, as well as a material being. Separation from wisdom—*ignorance*,—is intellectual death. Separation from holiness—*sin*,—is moral death. Separation from spirit—*dissolution*,—is material death. How came this triple death? By him that had the power of it, Heb. ii. 14. Satan struck his death-blow on the proudest part of man. He induced him to seek after forbidden knowledge, and so effected his separation from the true wisdom. This was intellectual death; that is to say, man's powers of mind were now turned into another channel, and no longer thought, discerned, and judged, in concert with the mind of God. As the blind eye is dead to this material world, so a blind or perverted intellect is dead to the high wisdom of heaven. Man's nature is such that he can only love the things he sees; and now that his intellectual vision has become blind to spiritual realities, his affections are engrossed with the things of sense. Intellect may be called, the head of a spiritual being. To dazzle him with a thought too great for his capacity, may be the same, in the spiritual world, as a stunning blow on the head is in this world of matter. The natural effect of a stun is *insensibility*, which may be analogous, among spirits, to death. If this analogy be correct, it enables us to understand the process of Adam's fall. His intellect was dazzled, his heart became insensible, and being thereby fallen from God, or dead in mind and heart, nothing remained but the passing of a just judgment to effect the separation of soul and body. Material and moral death are the double issue of intellectual death. As, then, death, through Satan, entered by means of stolen knowledge, so now, life, through Christ, enters by means of revealed knowledge.

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee." "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, (in order) that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them," John xvii. 26. The true declaration of God's character, or name, by Christ, brings love into the heart that believes it; just as the false declaration of God's character, by Satan, brought aversion and dread into the hearts of our first parents. Therefore, the apostle thus blesses the Christians, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord," 2 Peter i. 2. He reminds them, also, by what means they had escaped the pollutions of the world, "Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," ii. 20. And therefore concludes his epistle with these words, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," iii. 18. Satan came to man as deception and falsehood; Christ comes as righteousness and truth As it was by belief of the lie that man fell, so it is by belief of the truth that man is saved. The lie received is death to the soul; the truth received is life. Adam ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and died; we eat of the bread-fruit of the tree of life, and live for ever, John vi. 48, 51. "The words that I speak unto you," says our Lord, "they are spirit, and they are life," John vi 63. They are so when received in the meaning, and to the purpose, which our Lord himself intends. All who so receive them, find them to be spirit and life. It was the command of God, that proved the word of life to creation; but now it is the Son of God, that is the word of life to the soul. Therefore he declares, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but IS PASSED from death unto life," John v. 24. Eternal life, therefore, is a present reality. We do not wait for its possession till a future period. "This is the record, that God HATH GIVEN to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life," 1 John v. 11—13.

By this phrase—eternal life, something greater is meant than when we say, everlasting life. Eternity includes past, present, and future. Everlasting, refers only to the two latter. Eternal life, then, is that which never had a beginning. It is the life of God. When man was created to live, and move, and have his being in God, that eternal life which was in God, became an everlasting life in man; since, however, it comes from, and is of, God, it is rightly called in Scripture eternal life. In itself it is eternal; but in reference to man, in whom it has a beginning, it is everlasting. Life's first entrance into man was by a word; so now its new entrance, its new birth is by "The Word." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not," John i. 1—5. This is a most remarkable, comprehensive, and important, passage, as beautiful as it is instructive. God is the Word—the Word is Life, the Life is Light, the Light shineth in darkness, the darkness comprehended it not. Being God, it is eternal; being Word, it is intellectual; being Life, it destroys death; and being Light, it dispels darkness; but being intellectual and moral light, the darkness of ignorance and sin comprehends it not. This non-comprehension is wilful. God the Word, the Light, the Life, was not far off, but was come near. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. That flesh with human tones uttered forth the word from within; it said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," John vi. 33. "They are part of myself; I take this form; I use these tones, to suit your state; what your ears now hear, believe. Receive my words into your hearts; hear, and your soul shall live—it shall live for ever."

God the Son being thus exhibited as the Word, the Word being embodied in the Scriptures, the Scriptures being addressed to the intellect and heart of man, and the entrance of the words or truths of these Scriptures, being the instrumental means of salvation, natural men are tempted to conceive that salvation is a mere intellectual process; they regard the words and doctrines of Scripture as so many problems and propositions, to which they must yield their assent. There they rest satisfied. But they overlook the fact, that the truth is moral, as well as intellectual; that it is life, as well as light; that it is addressed to the heart, as well as to the understanding, "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. What does he believe? "The word of righteousness," Heb. v. 13. "Christ," the Word, "is of God made unto us righteousness," 1 Cor. i. 30. Receiving Christ, then, into the heart, man receives righteousness; and he receives also whatsoever Christ is besides, wisdom, strength, sanctification, and redemption. The soul being thus united to Christ as its righteousness, becomes freed from guilt and condemnation; to Christ as wisdom, is delivered from ignorance; to Christ as strength, is restored from weakness; to Christ as sanctification, is saved from unholiness; to Christ as redemption, is rescued from eternal bondage. Being united to Christ the Light, darkness is dispelled; to Christ the Life, death is destroyed; to Christ the Word, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are laid open before it, Col. ii. 3; to Christ the true God, finds again, in him, that God whom it had lost, and that eternal life which it had forfeited, 1 John v. 20. This is the restoration, the resuscitation, of the soul. It is put in possession of everlasting life, because it is put in possession of Christ, who is eternal life; and it is concerning this revived, this renewed, soul, this new-born spirit of man, that this verse speaks, and declares, "Your heart shall live for ever."

In the present condition of the believer, however, this life is feeble and confined. His flesh not being a partaker of it, always contends against it. The flesh recognizes, and understands, its own natural life, but this other life is strange and irksome to it. The flesh must therefore be destroyed, that the life, the true life, may be free. The shell must be thrown off, that the living creature may appear. The chrysalis must be burst, that the new creature may fly to another and happier region. The death of the body, therefore, is emphatically the life of the spirit. The soul goes to God: but it must previously have been of God. It must have had the eternal life abiding in it; otherwise, at its separation from the body, it must pass into eternal death. If, however, the eternal life have entered into it, before it leave the flesh, then assuredly, on its removal from the body, it enters into the eternal life.

What we have now considered, is altogether above, and beyond, earthly existence. This is true LIFE; it is all happiness; pure enjoyment; bliss unutterable, and uninterrupted. This is indeed TO LIVE, in the noblest, purest, most exalted sense. This is the height of human and angelic felicity. It is heaven. It is existence, possessing whatever is desirable, and freed from all that is undesirable. It is the entire satisfaction of every want, and feeling, and faculty of the soul's nature.

Reader, wouldst thou possess this blessedness? then "*lay hold on eternal life*," 1 Tim. vi. 12, 19. It is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 23. Receive Christ now into your heart. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John v. 11. It is in Christ, the second Adam, that it may be secured to us for ever. When life was lodged in the first Adam, he quickly lost it; and were it placed in any of us his children, we should lose it also. While, then, we bless God for this free gift, let us render unbounded, everlasting, praises and thanksgivings, that it is bestowed in such a manner, as to render loss on our part impossible, and the utmost efforts of the enemies of our souls nugatory and ineffectual.

THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

VERSE 27.—*All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*

HAVING thus taken a view of the personal character, the peculiar privilege, and the everlasting condition of his disciples individually, our Lord directs his thoughts onward to the glorious subject of the whole world's conversion unto God. Even now, that he is at the right hand of the throne on high, he still looks forward to the same object which he contemplated from the cross on Calvary. If over even one sinner returning from the error of his ways, the angels of God rejoice, how much more will He who bought him with his blood? Who shall estimate the Saviour's joy, the angels' gladness when multitudes of sinners, when all the sinners that stand upon the earth, shall remember themselves, and turn unto the Lord? What finite mind can conceive the glorious subject aright? It is foretold in prophecies —it is celebrated in psalms—it is announced in gospels —it is declared in epistles, it is unfolded in revelations, that "all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him!"

These words unfold to us part of that joy which was set before the Lord, while on the cross, and on account of which he patiently endured its agonies, and despised its shame. His mind seems to turn to it with peculiar delight. He dwells on it with deepest interest. He enlarges on the amazing theme; has his thoughts so occupied with its various details, that he expatiates on them in the remaining portion of the psalm; and is so fully satisfied with this prospective view of the fruit of the travail of his soul, that no other desire remains, and he concludes the psalm, and his mortal life together, saying, "It is all fulfilled."

It is declared in this verse, "All the ends of the world shall REMEMBER." This is a remarkable expression. It implies that man has forgotten God. It represents all the successive generations of the world as one. And then it exhibits that one generation, as if it had been in paradise, suddenly remembering the Lord whom it had known there, but had long forgotten. Imagine an individual to have lost a valuable jewel; that he can neither recollect its exact appearance, nor its full value, nor the place where it was lost; that he occupies himself in a continual search; often thinks he has found it, and mistakes other objects that partly resemble it—and that at last he gathers all the valuable things he can collect, and bestows on them the name, or names, of his favourite, deplored, and invaluable jewel. Imagine that after a time, he suddenly recollects the time when, and the place where, it was lost. The form, colour, size, and value of his jewel, come vividly to his remembrance. He starts up with delight, casts aside his collected valuables, rushes to the spot, and darts his hand upon the lost treasure. Apply this picture spiritually, and it will represent the conduct of man in reference to God. Having lost sight of the Glorious Being who was seen in Eden, man looked for him in air, and earth, and sea. In his eager, but blind search, he took many things for God. He examined every good and valuable thing, that met his observation. He converted every useful thing into a god. To supply that deficiency which he felt, he collected to himself gods many, and lords many. As years rolled on, he still added to the number; and that the object which he sought might somehow or somewhere be found, he deified himself, and every thing in nature. Every thing, too, not in nature, of which he heard, or could conceive, he did deify, lest that one thing which he worshipped not, might possibly be God. Even all this did not satisfy. Man was not sure that he had found his object. His soul still craved after a Being, whom it knew not how to describe. Perplexed, and standing thoughtful in the wisest city of his idolatry, he bethought himself of an expedient, and hastily set himself with his children to erect an altar to "The Unknown God." St. Paul came amongst them after they had been so engaged. He expostulated with them: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things. And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art, and man's device," Acts xvii. 22—29. What an appropriate address! How exquisitely adapted to their state of mind! Like men groping in the dark, they were "feeling after the lost Godhead." Yet so blind, and self-willed, were they, that they mocked this messenger of the true God, and despised his doctrine. The gospel is not always successfully declared. It has not, even in the nineteenth century, obtained universal supremacy. The dark places of the earth are still crowded with human beings who are groping after light, and truth, and God. However eagerly they embrace their innumerable gods and goddesses, they are still seeking to increase their number. But it shall not be so, when the period spoken of in this verse arrives. Then the Glorious Being seen in Eden, shall be recognized "in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Those busy idolaters, who ransack the ends of the world, and crowd their houses, and fill their hands, with gods, and lords, and images, shall cast their idols to the moles and to the bats, and fall upon their knees in earnest supplication, and adoring reverence.

Such shall be the case. The fulness of the world shall be converted unto the Lord. Not a nation or kingdom shall be ignorant of his name. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. In his own time he will show forth his glory, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. So plainly was this event exhibited before the psalmist in prophetic vision, that he speaks of it as if actually beholding its complete accomplishment; "The Lord HATH MADE KNOWN his salvation. All the ends of the earth HAVE SEEN the salvation of our God." Psa. xcviii. 2, 3.

The converted nations shall not only obtain remembrance of their past loss, but shall also be filled with the knowledge of present duty. "They shall turn unto the

Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." When the Lord takes unto him his great power, and reigns, though there will be fearful judgments and dreadful overturnings, yet we ought not to forget that this great power is as much, if not more, of a moral than of a physical, nature. His might, which can make every knee of man to bow, and even devils tremble, shall, at its proper moment, exercise a moral power to secure also the homage of the heart. His people shall be made willing in the day of his power to worship the Lord in the beauties of holiness, Psa. cx. 3. The Scriptures fully assert this fact. "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name," Psa. lxxxvi. 9. This is the fulfilment of the Father's promise, and of the Son's expectation. It is the joy that was set before him on the cross. It is the high reward which that bitter death obtained. Hear how the Father addressed the Son, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see, and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee," Isa. xlix. 6, 7. The same truth is stated by the apostle, as a necessary consequence of the Saviour's obedience, "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of

God the Father," Phil. ii. 9—11. What a glorious prospect! He who was mocked by Pilate, Herod, and the Jews, shall be worshipped by all people. The inhabitants of the world, who now love sin, shall all then have learned righteousness; for "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isa. ix. 11. Who would not desire that it may be hastened?

"Waft, waft, ye winds, his story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spread from pole to pole."

It is our high privilege to be called to join in the prayers of our Head. He is now in heaven supplicating on behalf of sinners, and his Church on earth ardently engages in the same intercession:—

"O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men, that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations."

"O merciful God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen."

All the works of the Lord are carried on by prayer. He pours forth his Spirit upon his church, to ask for those things which he designs to accomplish. When he assures the scattered children of Abraham, that he will restore them again to their own land he declares, as a preparatory measure, "Yet for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them," Ezek. xxxvi. 3. When the people are to look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn, it is not till the "Spirit of grace and of supplications" has been poured upon them from on high, Zech. xii. 10. Our Lord teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." The souls who compose the Church above cry day and night before God, "How long, O Lord?" Rev. vi. 10; Luke xviii. 7. The Church below thus presents herself at his footstool:—"Beseeching thee, that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine ELECT, and to hasten thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Let us not then despond. The increase of prayer at the present day, for this object, is a pledge and proof that it will surely, perhaps speedily, be accomplished. Though so many millions of human beings still exist in heathen darkness, let our faith be strong in the sure word of prophecy, and though the vision tarry, yet let not our hearts be discouraged. The Lord Jesus, the Head, and the members of his Church, by the same Spirit, unite in the same expectation, and in the same petitions. The psalmist rejoices in the prospect, and says, "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come," Psa. lxv. 2. And in the name of the whole Church he thus prays for the blessing of the Lord, and rejoices at the effect which it will produce in the whole earth. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him," Psa. lxvii.

THE ENTHRONEMENT.

VERSE 28.—*For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.*

HERE is assigned the reason of that remarkable change, in this idolatrous world, which the previous verse had described. So great an event must have an adequate cause. That cause is, that the Lord hath taken to himself his great power, and hath reigned, Rev. xi. 17.

Christ is not now reigning as king of the earth, but interceding as priest, at the right hand of the throne on high. There he will continue to officiate on behalf of his Church, till it shall please him to offer up the fulness of that prayer which God the Father has entitled him to present, " Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Psa. ii. 8. From this passage we may conclude, that the conversion of the heathen nations has been going forward on earth, according to the extent of petition which Christ presents in heaven. The extension of the gospel in our own day, is the immediate result of an especial request on the part of our great High-priest. He asked for the islands of the south, and God the Father bestowed them. He asked for the villages of joy in one of the plains of India, and hundreds have acknowledged the name of Jesus, to the glory of God the Father. The last request which he shall present, will be for the uttermost parts in possession. At present they are his by right, by promise, and by expectation. But no sooner shall he prefer the petition, than they shall become his by possession. As he said before he was lifted up upon the cross, so will he pray before he is exalted to the throne, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Daniel beheld this in the night visions, "And, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him," Dan. vii. 13. Then, and there, it may be, he will say, "Give me the heathen for my inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession." "And there shall be given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages shall serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 14.

This is the kingdom which our Lord here contemplates from the cross. It forms part of the vision of joy that was set before him. Thus, in the fulness of time, the kingly throne shall be set for the Lord Jesus. The office of priest shall cease. The period of grace and salvation shall terminate. He will sit upon the throne of his glory. He shall be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.

By the phrase "kingdom of God," which occurs so frequently in Scripture, we are to understand either his kingdom of grace, or his kingdom of glory, and sometimes both. But what is the kingdom of grace, and what the kingdom of glory? The kingdom of grace, is where God reigns in a gracious or merciful manner; the kingdom of glory, is where God reigns in a glorious or all-powerful manner. The kingdom of grace is now being established over our world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. v. 19. He is now extending the sceptre of mercy towards sinners. He rules and reigns over their hearts by his Spirit. He bears with those who reject his authority. He is affording them both time and opportunity, to turn from their rebellion, and to become his subjects and servants. *This is the kingdom of God's grace.* But the kingdom of God's *glory* shall be set up in its own time, and then he shall take to himself his great power and reign, from the one end of this earth to the other. Then the loud voice shall be heard in heaven, saying, "Now is come the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ," Rev. xii. 10. Then the sceptre of mercy shall give place to the throne of judgment. Sinners shall no longer be invited to salvation ; there shall be no more space for repentance ; and Christ himself shall say, "Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me," Luke xix. 27. But to those who were subjects of his kingdom of grace, he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom" (that is, the kingdom of glory) "prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34.

The kingdom of grace, then, is preparatory to the kingdom of glory ; and this term, "kingdom of God," including both these, is to be defined as that sphere where God is acknowledged, and reigns as king ; or where God *ought* to be acknowledged, and ought to reign as king. On this earth, God ought to reign supreme ; but Scripture informs us that he does not reign universally, and is not acknowledged as king, save by a small part of its inhabitants. Satan is called *the prince* and *the God* of this world. In heaven itself, he first unfurled the black banner of rebellion. Driven thence, he planted it on our earth, and with a serpent's hiss, summoned man to his standard. The king of the lower creation joined the enemies of his Maker. He stretched forth his right hand to the forbidden tree ; and, as it were, registered an oath in nature, that no allegiance was henceforth due to the authority of God. Satan's triumph was now complete: he had lost a crown in heaven, but he had established a throne on earth. Man, attempting to be his own master, became the slave of Satan, and all he possessed his prey. Proud of his acquired dominions, he exercises a tyranny of darkness over them all. He keeps a vigilant watch on every part. When he presumed to present himself amongst the sons of God, and was interrogated, "Whence comest thou?" he instantly replied, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it," Job i. 7. And when he attempted to prevail over our blessed Saviour in the wilderness, the last temptation to which he had recourse, was to show him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in a moment of time, with this proud and kingly speech, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me: and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine," Luke iv. 6, 7.

Thus we learn from the Scriptures, that the kingly power of God was denied from the beginning; and that Satan's power and kingdom are now extended over the whole earth. When, therefore, our Lord commands us to "seek first the kingdom of God," Matt. vi. 33, he means that it should be our earnest desire, and endeavour, that the kingship of the earth may again be exercised by Him to whom it belongs, and that the dominion of Satan may be speedily deprived of all its power over ourselves, our neighbours, and the world at large.

To illustrate this truth, let us suppose that the Queen of these realms were banished from her throne by a wicked and powerful faction. Suppose that traitors were in possession of power, and that no friends of the exiled queen durst show themselves. Imagine that the dethroned sovereign sent an unknown messenger to comfort the hearts of her different friends with secret intelligence of her return with a mighty army. How should that messenger address them? Would he not say to one, "Be not faint-hearted, the Queen shall soon be restored?" How would he warn another, not to be dazzled with the new order of things, for it should speedily be destroyed. Might he not address a young man thus, "Be not ambitious of their honours, but seek first the kingdom of the Queen and her restoration, and then you shall enjoy them all?" And would he not comfort and encourage every one of them under their losses and trials for the Queen's sake, with the assurance that she was nigh at hand with powerful armies, to take possession of her kingdom, and to restore joy and gladness amongst all her loyal, but now mourning and oppressed, subjects?

Such is the address of Christ in his first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount. *He* is the unknown messenger. He is the sovereign himself in disguise, cheering the hearts of his friends with suitable words. "Blessed," says he, "are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Teaching them how to address their prayers to God, the second petition which he bids them offer is, "Thy kingdom come." And, lest they should be tempted to seek comfort and quiet under the usurper of his throne, he solemnly exhorts them, "Seek first the kingdom of God." Be on the Lord's side, take part with your lawful sovereign; seek no rest, no honours for yourself under the tyranny of the usurper; but seek first the restoration of your royal Master. Let it be the principal object of your life to further the establishment and prosperity of his kingdom. Seek that his grace may reign in your hearts, and that no foreign power obtain an influence over you. Seek that that King who reigns in righteousness, may be the God of your families, the Ruler of your country, and the only Governor among the nations. Seek that Satan's kingdom may be overthrown, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened; "that blessed time," foretold in prophecy, when "all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ," Rev. xi. 15.

But, alas! this is a duty awfully neglected, because we shut our eyes to the real condition of things. We are unwilling to admit the Scripture truth, that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," or the wicked one, 1 John v. 19.

Let us never forget that ours is a conquered world; that power now is in unlawful hands; but that full possession is being disputed with the rebels. Therefore is it that we read in Scripture of wars and fightings;—of captains, leaders, and armies;—of soldiers, weapons, and suits of armour. Therefore is it that we are, as it were, enlisted into the service of the Captain of our salvation, by those beautiful, appropriate, and emphatic words, which accompany the signing of the cross of Christ upon our infant forehead: "In token that hereafter we shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified; and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil: and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end." It is a war of principles, of truth and error, of good and evil, of light and darkness, in which we are engaged.

The contest has been, and is, whether righteousness and truth shall keep possession of the earth; or whether iniquity and error shall prevail. The field of battle is the heart of man. "The weapons of our warfare," says the apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations," (or reasonings,) "and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. What those weapons are by which such a noble victory is obtained, the same apostle informs us: "Put on the whole armour of God; that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darknesss of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or wicked spirits) in high places. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints," Eph. vi.

Such is the armour which our God has provided for us. It is a spiritual armour, because it is a spiritual warfare. The battle is now waging in the breast of every one of us, and is being urged in the world around us. Christ endowed his Church with his own Spirit, under the name of "POWER from on high," Luke xxiv. 49; saying, as it were, to his widowed spouse, "Go in this thy might." Under the dispensation of the Spirit, the Church ought to have obtained greater power and extension. But alas! she has been unfaithful to her Lord's parting command, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," Mark xvi. 15. She has been unfaithful to the Spirit, in whose power she was to fight all the battles of the Lord; she has been unfaithful to her own solemn engagements in the baptismal covenant. The sad result testifies against the Church of Christ. Eighteen centuries have passed away, and the great majority of the earth's inhabitants are still in heathen darkness! Christ has been greatly disappointed of that fruit which he might well have expected to reap from the exertions of his Church. With the fullest justice we may suppose him to address her now, as he did the Church of Sardis, or of Laodicea, of old, "I have not found thy works perfect before God. These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent," Rev. iii. 14, 15. Of late years, great exertions have been made to send the glad tidings of salvation to every quarter of the globe; but when compared to the amount of work to be overtaken, these exertions, valuable and extensive as they are, appear to be but as the contributions of a noble river to the mighty ocean. It may be that the Lord has been delaying from year to year, till his Church should more effectually discharge her duty: or rather in his long-suffering towards sinners, has been allowing them a protracted space for repentance. Time, however, is fast rolling on, and sooner or later, ONE on whose head are many crowns, and whose name is called the Word of God, shall come forth. The armies of heaven shall follow him, for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords, Rev. xix. 16. "In that day shall there be one Lord, who shall be KING over all the earth," Zech. xiv. 9. Then shall it be said, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness," Psa. xlvii. 5—8. That "shout" is an attendant sign of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, 1 Thess. iv. 16. That "trumpet" is the sounding of the last, the seventh angel, when the great voices in heaven shall be heard saying, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever," Rev. xi. 15. Then shall be fulfilled the promise made to the Virgin Mary by the mouth of the announcing angel, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," Luke i. 32.

This title of "*Governor*" in the text, is expressly applied to the Lord Jesus, in a passage which subjoins a most remarkable testimony to his Divinity. "And thou, Bethlehem, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Compare Matt. ii. 6, and Micah v. 2. The children of Israel are now dispersed throughout the earth. Many days have they abode without a king, and without a prince; but when the Governor shall issue his mandate among the nations, and when he shall pour upon the children of Israel the Spirit of grace and of supplications, then shall they seek the Lord their God, and David their king, Zech. xii. 10; Hos. iii. 5. For "behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. Then shall it be said among the heathen, "The Lord reigneth," Psa. xcvi. 10. The just God, even the Saviour will say, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," Isa. xlv. 22, 23. And it shall come to pass that all nations shall worship the king, the Lord of Hosts; and holiness to the Lord shall be inscribed on every earthly thing, Zech. xiv. 16, 20.

When we contemplate this glorious event, what language, what prayer, can express the feelings and desires of our hearts? Surely, every Christian will say for himself, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, in thy glory. Reign till thine enemies be made thy footstool: and remember me, Lord, when thou comest into thy kingdom!"

THE UNIVERSAL WORSHIP.

VERSE 29.—*All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him.*

HAVING considered the vastness and glory of the prospect, our Lord next contemplates the reality and minuteness of its accomplishment. He sets before his mind individual cases, and particular facts. He appears to look upon this picture of the future, as we do on a grand historical painting of the past. It seems natural to gaze with silent admiration on the picture as a whole, then to fix the attention on particular groups, and testify our sense of the general excellence, by expatiating on the truth and beauty of its several parts.

Our Lord here specifies a fact, which fully proves the universality of that holy worship which shall pervade his kingdom. "They that be fat, shall eat and worship." The term in the original denotes the great and mighty of this world. It is most frequently used in an unfavourable sense, in reference to the wicked. We understand the passage, therefore, to signify that even that class, who are now the most self-satisfied, purse-proud, and haughty, who, possessing all their heart's desire, are too commonly, at present, despisers of Christ and his gospel, shall then be found amongst the crowd of humble worshippers.

To how many does the Scripture thus speak? "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17. How often did our Lord turn away from the great and rich men of his generation, who scorned his doctrine, and solace his mind with this reflection, "To the poor the gospel is preached." But when the kingdom shall be given into the possession of our Messiah, even that class who now despise, shall all then glorify him. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised," Psa. lxxii. 10, 12, 15. It shall be even so. Christ's triumph shall be complete. His worship shall be universal; even the "fat" shall despise their former dainties, and shall "eat" with delight what Christ has prepared. They shall no longer refuse the bread of life, but will esteem it better than the honey or the honeycomb.

But there is another point to be specially noted in the great picture. So minutely and fully shall the word of God be fulfilled, so universally shall Christ be honoured, that also "all they that go down to the dust shall worship before him." We understand not this phrase to mean simply all those who die, but to refer to that class of whose death little more is generally noted, than that they go down to the grave. This is a delicate and appropriate phrase, when speaking with reference to those human beings who lead an unnoticed, animal existence; who pass away as though they had never been, and whose souls are not numbered with the redeemed. It is sufficiently expressive. It is remarkably descriptive. It comprehends all that we feel disposed to say regarding them, "They go down to the dust." God's people lie down to sleep—the others descend to the dust. Though it be true that the bodies of both classes alike moulder in the tomb, yet the mind naturally describes them by that particular which is most characteristic of each.

We understand, then, the whole verse to speak of the two great classes, the rich and the poor; and to signify that the people shall be all righteous in the kingdom of Christ,—that from the least even to the greatest, all shall know the Lord. That no doubt of the certainty and universality of this fact may exist, it is stated in this definite and double form, that all the great and fat ones of the earth, and all the ignoble poor who now die, and are as unnoticed and valueless, in worldly estimation, as the dust, shall then bow the knee, the head, the heart, in living, dutiful submission to Jesus of Nazareth, when he stands forth crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords.

It is not asserted that all of each of these two classes who ever lived on earth, shall then be raised out of their graves, and become the true servants of the Saviour. No, some shall have no part in the first resurrection, Rev. xx. 6. They shall lie in their graves, till the trumpet of the last judgment summon them to render an account of the deeds done in the body. There is no repentance in the grave. No purgation of souls in the other world. As the tree falleth, so it must lie. As life left them, so judgment shall find them. They who are unholy, shall then be unholy still.

There is indeed, however, a solemn period in the history of these individuals, in which they shall bow the knee before their once despised Lord. In the morning of the resurrection, when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and arise to receive his judgment, the unbelieving shall fall upon their knees in fear and consternation. The rich and the poor, in one undistinguished company, brought back from the chambers of death, shall behold Him who was crucified on the cross, crowned, and sitting on the throne of universal empire. "Every eye shall see him;" not a single human being that has lived on the earth shall be absent. Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, Christian and heathen, all shall be summoned to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. "And they also, which pierced him," the judges and officers, the soldiers and people, Jews and Romans, who were the active instruments of his death, shall behold him. Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Scribes and Pharisees, and all that crowd of citizens and strangers, who took delight in his condemnation, and were spectators of his crucifixion on the mount of Calvary, shall behold the Saviour in his glory. Of the certainty of this, he himself assured his judges: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," Matt. xxvi. 64. All those professing Christians also, who have pierced the Redeemer by their sins, and unrepented backslidings, "wounding him in the house of his friends," Zech. xiii. 6; and all those to whom the gospel of the pierced Surety came, but who denied the Lord that bought them, 2 Pet. ii. 1, shall be summoned thither. "And all kindreds of the earth," who are then alive, and not prepared for his appearing, shall see him robed in majesty, and "shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen," Rev. i. 7. "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 10, 11.

But this passage in the psalm before us speaks of the homage of love, and not the prostration of terror. The "fat," the rich and great men, shall, at that period, become one with the meek, ver. 26. They shall eat of the banquet of good things, which God has prepared for them that love him, and they shall worship the King, the Lord of hosts, Zech. xiv. 16. And "all they that go down to the dust," shall gratefully bow before him. This verse, then, must be understood to allude to those only, who shall be living on the earth when the Messiah reigns. At present, men are divided into two classes, the rich and the poor. Scripture does not assert that all the former reject the Saviour, or all the latter receive his gospel. This is far from being the case. Many of both classes are now walking in holy obedience to his will, and many in disobedience. Such is the case with individuals, but in reference to the classes it is different. Those who are satisfied with their worldly portion, have always been distinguished, as a body, by their opposition to the humiliating doctrines of the cross: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," 1 Cor. i. 26. While in every age of the church, the poor, as a class, have been, and are, distinguished by their attachment and devotedness to the Saviour's cause. In the kingdom of the Messiah, however, both classes shall be eager to confess his name, and serve his cause. The rich and the poor shall meet together in love to one common Lord, in fealty to one acknowledged Sovereign. "The people shall be all righteous," Isa. lx. 21. "Many nations shall say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isa. ii. 2—4. The wild beasts of the forest shall be changed from the ferocity of their natures; "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isa. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them," Jer. xxxi. 34; Heb. viii. 11. "All nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen," Psa. lxxii. 17—19.

THE AUTHOR OF THE FAITH.

VERSE 29.—*And none can keep alive his own soul:* or, *And no man hath quickened his own soul.*—Prayer-book version.*

WHEN our blessed Lord surveyed the picture of future glory, which was placed before him in vision upon the cross, and, as it were, beheld the earth peopled with its righteous inhabitants, he instantly remarks, that notwithstanding the holiness of their perfect and blessed condition, they shall be as much dependent on the Author of life, as they were in their fallen state. None of them, even in that most favourable position, can quicken his soul, or maintain its pious frames, and feelings, one instant apart from Christ. Clusters of ripe grapes may hang abundantly on these righteous branches, but still they are only branches. The true Vine must have all the glory!

Such seems to be the signification which may, we trust not incorrectly, be attached to this passage. It is good at all times to be reminded of the grand and important truth that Christ is our life, Col. iii. 4; John xiv. 6; and that in him alone are given to us the things that pertain unto life and godliness, 2 Pet. i. 3. And it is especially suitable and right, when pencilling before our ravished eyes this bright picture of the earth changed into a paradise, that there should be written underneath, as a motto for our instruction, when contemplating these happy children of the second, the living, Adam, and as an appropriate lesson and warning to themselves, as descendants of the first, the fallen, Adam, "No man hath quickened, or can keep alive, his own soul."

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* The brevity of the original, (only three words,) in this place, occasions ambiguity of meaning, and difference of explanation. Some understand them to be simply expletive of the preceding truth, that men go down to the dust, and that none of them can prevent the stroke of the last enemy. On the various opinions of the learned, it is not suitable to our present purpose to enlarge. There seems to be no adequate reason, why our own excellent translation, or that of Cranmer's Bible, retained in the Book of Common Prayer, should not be adhered to. We humbly conceive that this passage contains a statement of vitally important truth, in an important connexion.

Christ, by his Spirit, is the alone author of the faith, the only preserver of the soul's piety and peace. The purest, and highest, act of our earthly communion, is, in itself, and as far as our power extends, a transitory emotion, an evanescent feeling. We lie down at night in a calm and heavenly frame, and we awake in the morning heavy in spirit, and earthly in our desires. We retire to rest, mourning that we are not more holy, and we rise up blessing and praising God for that precious blood-shedding, which cleanseth from all sin. So changeable is even the best Christian in himself. Our first father was so. Even in paradise, "very good," as he was pronounced to be, by his Creator, he could not keep alive his own soul. Like him, we are ever changing, not wilfully, but unavoidably. When the new heavens and earth, however, are established, the inhabitants shall no longer be annoyed by the intrusions of self, with its sins, its weaknesses, and pride. The blessed truth that Christ alone is their life, shall not only be their strength and safety, but also their highest happiness and glory. The grace of Christ which did all for them in time, shall still do all for them in eternity. Salvation from first to last is all of grace. When the Head-stone shall be brought forth, there shall be shoutings of Grace, grace unto it, Zech. iv. 7.

In the "new creation," into which all those, who have been introduced spiritually by Christ's reigning in the soul, shall be admitted actually and bodily by his reigning in the earth, all the redeemed, shining like stars in the firmament of heaven, shall revolve round the Sun of Righteousness, and reflect his pure, life-giving, and eternal, light. He is the centre of life, and light, and gladness. As the material sun is to our world, so is Christ to the redeemed creation. He raised us from the ruins of the fall. He quickened us by his Spirit, from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness. He inspired the first desire after salvation. He inclined our hearts to pray. He taught us to abhor sin. He opened our understandings to understand the Scriptures. He blessed to us the various means of grace. He put love for the brethren into our hearts. He enabled us to take sweet counsel together. He strengthened us to resist the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He delivered us from dangerous trials. He encouraged us to persevere. He armed us for the fight. He made us more than conquerors. He animated our hopes. He dispelled our fears. He cheered our drooping faith. He restored our wavering souls. He enabled us to endure scorn and opposition. He supported us along the journey of life. He solaced and enlivened the bed of death. From the cradle to the grave every mercy is his gift, every good thought his suggestion, every charitable deed his operation. To him be all the glory! The Holy Ghost, who is the mighty worker in all these, is his Spirit. He acts by his direction, according to his will, and with his purchased blessings. The Spirit gives nothing, but what belongs to Christ. The Spirit promises nothing, but what Christ has spoken. The Spirit accomplishes nothing, but what is to carry on the work of Christ in our souls.

It was God, in Christ, that came near to man in time, and so it is man, in Christ, that is brought near to God throughout eternity. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. In him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."—"And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power," Col. ii. 3, 10. When sin shut up the fountains of heaven from man, Christ opened them again to him, in himself. When the sinner was banished from paradise, Christ obtained admission for him by his blood. The outraged law he magnified, and made honourable. The justice of God he satisfied, to the very uttermost. Man's name he took; man's debts he paid; man's death he died; man's deliverance he effected. All glory to the Surety! From him our hopes begin; in him our all is centred; on him our eternity of bliss depends!

Beware, then, O Christian, beware of self-confidence. Hold fast the head, even Christ, and let nothing beguile you from him, Col. ii. 18, 19. The least thought of your own progress in virtue may open the fatal door of departure. Good-self is as dangerous to the Christian, to lead him away from Christ, as formerly bad-self was to keep him back from approaching him. Even at the very moment of your thanking God for those gracious changes, which he has wrought in you, and are concluding that now you shall not quickly fall, Satan may be secretly gaining an advantage over you. To defeat and counteract this, God may see it needful to send an afflicting providence. Learn this lesson from the experience of the psalmist. Hear how he declares in his spiritual prosperity, that he shall never be moved, and thanks God, saying, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." In this thanksgiving, not a word occurs, but what every Christian would desire to be enabled to use. But perhaps the great Searcher of hearts perceived that the psalmist trusted more in his own mountain that stood, than in that favour which made it strong. Therefore it became necessary to the welfare of David's soul, that this weed of sin should not be allowed to grow, and that a blast should nip its earliest bud. He informs us that this was the case; for he immediately adds, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled," Psa. xxx. 6, 7. Tempt not the Lord, then, O Christian, to deal thus with your soul. Keep your heart free for Christ; love him supremely; trust in him perpetually; draw all your supplies from his fulness. In life and death, in time and in eternity, lean on Christ, and say, "Not unto me, Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name be the glory," Psa. cxv. 1.

Be humble, watchful, and prayerful. Remember that the Saviour said, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5; and be assured that apart from him you are nothing. The supply of the Spirit of Jesus, is absolutely necessary to the most advanced Christian, every moment of his existence. In heaven itself, his language shall still be, as before,

"Hangs my helpless soul on thee."

Blessed helplessness, that makes us lie in the bosom of the Saviour! This is *the heaven* of heaven; and, in proportion as we are enabled to realize it now by the Spirit, it is heaven on earth!

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
All my help from thee I bring."

The angels stand not, by their own inherent excellence. They depend on God for their support in holy adoration, as well as in activity of existence. And I would not, may the Christian say, I would not choose to have life, grace, strength, in myself, but all in Christ my Lord. I am content to be nothing, through all eternity, but what Jesus makes me. I can afford to lose all things, even the idol *self*, since God shall be my all in all. I rejoice to be humbled while on earth, by the recollection that I can do nothing good of myself, and that God alone hath wrought all my works in me, Isa. xxvi. 12. I rejoice to know that even in the perfect state of glory, no man can quicken, or keep alive, his own soul; for these truths will ever constrain me to keep close to my head and Saviour, to abide in him as my life, John xv. 4; my temple, Rev. xxi. 22; the everlasting hiding-place of my soul, and eternal fountain of my bliss!

THE SEED.

VERSE 30.—*A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.*

THE unwillingness of man by nature, and his consequent inability, to serve the Lord, are truths plainly and unequivocally taught in holy Scripture, Rom. iii. 9, 12; viii. 7, 8; John v. 40. Unless, then, the Lord should interpose, there could not be found in any human breast, a single good thought or desire towards God, Rom. ix. 29. Satan would consequently enjoy a full triumph; the whole human race, without exception, would be his active and willing instruments against the God that made them. But the Lord Immanuel has declared that it shall not be so. Christ, as it were, looked down from heaven, and said, "I will enter the rebels' camp, and bring back many to their allegiance. The traitor shall not possess all for his own. On God's own earth a people shall serve him, and disown the usurper." Thus spake God's champion. He laid aside his glory, assumed the human form, and came into the very midst of his enemies. They surrounded him on every side; he was seized, condemned, and executed. In his dying moments, they exulted over him as vanquished; but even then he triumphed in spirit over his foes, asserted that his object of turning many to God could not be baffled, and cheered his departing soul with this assurance: "A seed shall serve him."

This figurative expression signifies Christ and his people, who yield true obedience to God. They are called by this name in a spiritual and figurative, but most appropriate sense. The idea is taken from the operations of the husbandman, who carefully reserves every year a portion of his grain for seed. Though it be small, compared with all the produce of his harvest, yet he prizes it very highly, and estimates it by the value of the whole crop it may yield in the succeeding autumn. Nor does he look only to the quantity, he pays particular regard to the quality of his seed. He reserves only the best: nay, he will put away his own, if spoiled, that he may procure better. The very smallest quantity of really good seed, is to him an object of great desire; and if, by grievous failure of crops, he should be able to procure only a single grain, yet would he accept it thankfully, preserve it carefully, and plant it in the most favourable soil. Such is the source from which this metaphor is taken. The good seed of human nature, which God planted, became corrupted in the earth; it failed to yield the return of righteousness. God looked over the successive generations of men, but found not even a single individual among them all, whom He could reserve as the new root, or seed, of another and a righteous succession. At last one man was found,—one only man, perfect, and without spot; one single grain of human nature was obtained, and God took that, nourished it carefully, and planted it in a fruitful soil. That one grain was Jesus Christ. He was exactly such as the Holy God had long been looking for. He was wholly a good seed. He spake of himself, and said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," John xii. 24. Accordingly, as the one grain of pure wheat, He was laid in the earth; in due time he sprang forth, and became the fruitful source of a new and imperishable seed. He is therefore emphatically denominated "THE SEED." As such, he was promised to our disconsolate parents in the garden of Eden, Gen. iii. 15. Under the same name, also, he was promised to Abraham, the Father of the faithful, Gal. iii. 16. And in the fulness of time this promise was fulfilled. Woman, who was first in the transgression, was the first to obtain the promise, Luke i. 28. God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, Gal. iv. 4; Isa. vii. 14. And this seed of the woman became the stock and source of a new and holy race. These, after him, are called the seed. They receive their life from him, their new nature, and their new name. Yet in every age hitherto, they have been only as a seed, as a handful in the earth. But they are the seed whom the Lord hath blessed. As the various generations come and depart, the Great Husbandman, through the seed of the woman, reserves a seed to himself from amongst them. They are spoken of in this verse: "a seed shall serve him."

The latter clause informs us "that it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." It seems, from this expression, considered as referring to the Almighty Father, as if God were waiting to find an entire generation on the earth, living wholly to his service. Every earthly father desires, when surrounded by his family, to behold them all loving, all obeying him. God seeks this from his human family. What a happy scene would it present! What a subject for prayer does it furnish! Had all the people of Enoch's generation walked with God, as he did, they might all have been translated with him to the regions of joy! Blessed termination to this sin-sorrowing world!

But there is another, and a more appropriate sense in which we should understand these words, namely, in reference to God the Son. The term "generation" may be regarded as synonymous with "posterity," and the whole verse taken as an instructive reply to the query of the prophet, when, having stated that Christ was cut off out of the land of the living, he inquires, "Who shall declare his generation?" Isa. liii. 8; that is, his posterity. Answer, "A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a posterity."

To die childless, having no descendant to carry down their name to future periods, was considered as a great curse by the ancient Hebrews. A father was considered by them to live in his children, and to prolong his days in those of his descendants. But if he left none behind him, his existence appeared to them to be blotted out, and to become as if it had never been. The Jews, therefore, have always been remarkable for their genealogies and their posterities; the fathers looking forward to their descendants, and the children looking back to their progenitors. Our Lord himself is an instance of the latter. Two Evangelists have been careful to record the pedigree of the Saviour. Those two chapters, the first of Matthew, and the third of Luke, are more important than is generally allowed. They prove, respectively, that Joseph and Mary were the lineal descendants of King David; and that therefore in the adopted son of the one, and true son of the other, the two royal lines, from Solomon and Nathan, centred and terminated. He who was born of Mary had a right by birth, according to the flesh, to sit upon the throne of Israel. Had the crown not departed from Judah, it must have rested by descent on the head of Jesus of Nazareth. He died, however, and left no posterity. The lineal descent therefore became extinct in him. But He lives again, and will return to reign. No one, consequently, has any legal claim to sit upon the throne of David but himself. "Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown, UNTIL HE COME WHOSE RIGHT IT IS: and I will give it him," Ezek.

xxi. 26. Shall Christ, then, possess no name in the earth? Shall he who died for us, be as though he had never been? By no means. His very death shall be the source from whence a numerous seed shall spring. "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "He shall see his seed: he shall prolong his days," Isa. liii. 10. "A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to him for a posterity." The children of the flesh are not counted for the seed, but the children of the promise, Rom. ix. 8; Gal. iii. 26—29. As a man he has no descendants to represent him in the earth; but as the second Adam, he has, among all nations and languages, a seed given him by God the Father, who shall transmit his name to the end of time. The seed of Christ are a spiritual posterity. They derive their birth from the travail of Christ's soul. The Father comforted him by the assurance that he should see the fruit thereof, and be satisfied, Isa. liii. 11. Christ the seed is also the word. And it is by the incorruptible seed of the word that we are born again, 1 Pet. i. 2, 3. Those who believe the word, that is, have the seed of eternal truth sown in their hearts, are the sons of God, John i. 13. This enables us to understand how the Old Testament believers are one with Christians because Christ, in the form of the Word, was preached unto them, and thus proved a seed of life to their souls, as well as unto ours, Heb. iv. 2; Gal. iii. 8; John viii. 56; Luke viii. 11. By believing the word, we become the children of God, under the form of adoption. Christ is the true Son, we are adopted sons through him. He who was born of the Virgin Mary, thereby became the adopted son of his earthly Father: and we who are born of the travail of Christ's soul, that is, born of his Spirit, thereby become the adopted children of our heavenly Father. As Christ's claim to Joseph's special care, kindness, and protection, lay through Mary; so our title to the special love, and blessing, and protection, of our heavenly Father, lies through Christ. We first belong to him; and then in and through him we belong to God. Therefore he says, "Tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." He does not say, to your Father and my Father, and to your God and my God, but "to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," John xx. 17. Therefore he elsewhere calls them his children. "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me," Heb. ii. 13; Isa. viii. 18. With full confidence, therefore, that they should all be given to him, the Saviour resigned himself to death upon the cross. He left no name behind him in a posterity, but he knew that his name and his seed should endure for ever. Psa. lxxii. 17; lxxxix. 36. He beheld around him an infuriated multitude, whose hearts were set on his destruction, and who hated both him and his Father; but he consoled his dying spirit with this comforting consideration, "a seed shall serve him;" my children shall yield due homage to my Father; they shall take delight in the performance of his commandments; "for, from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen," Mal. i. 11.

"Service," willing, active, unremitting "service" is the characteristic of Christ's seed. Mere professors are contented to express their gratitude and love by words, the true seed seek to prove it by their lives. To promote God's glory, to extend the knowledge of the gospel, and to testify their love to the souls, by doing good to the bodies, of their fellow-men, are the great objects for which they live. Their meat and drink is to DO the will of God. The conclusion of our General Thanksgiving expresses the full desire of their hearts, "Give us, we beseech Thee, such a due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may show forth thy praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days: through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Reader, is this prayer the true utterance of your inmost soul? Do you not only offer, do you endeavour to perform it? Are you accustomed to serious self-examination on the momentous question of your daily service? Every wish is a prayer, every action is an oblation, at some shrine or other; every day of your life pays its tribute of homage to self, and the world, to Satan, or to God. Watch, then, over yourself. Be as a faithful soldier in an enemy's country; examine all that pass. Demand of every outgoing of thought, and word and deed, Whence comest thou? whither dost thou go? what is thine object? Let nothing doubtful escape thee. Inquire into every secret motive that actuates your heart, and what master is about to obtain your services. The seed of Christ do not serve sin; they strive even against themselves, and deny their besetting propensities. Do not, then, speak or pray in the name of God, and yet live and act for self, or Satan, or the world. Your words, indeed, tell what you profess; but your deeds tell what you are. Remember, we are only so far Christians as we live and act on Christian principles. Were we to ask, Art thou one of Christ's seed? it might, perhaps, be difficult to reply. But when we ask the same question in this other form, In what kind of service art thou engaged? the answer is at hand, supplied by every hour of every day, and by every look, and word, and deed, of that hour. Do you serve God? Have you a desire to do so? Do you put that desire into practice? Do you propose to yourself to live in such a manner as to bring honour to God? Is this your consideration in the expenditure of money, of time, and of opportunities? What is my object? Do you take yourself to task? Do you enter at times into the chamber of your conscience, and honestly ask, Am I now acting with an express intention to please God, as I wish my servant to do to please me? When you rise in the morning, do you say to yourself, What can I do this day to show my gratitude to God? What example can I set to others? What benefits can I bestow upon them? Or do such thoughts never enter into your mind? When you lie down at night, do you call yourself to account? Do you inquire, Have I really served God this day? When I did speak, or write, or read, or transact business, did I do so for myself, or with a desire and intention to glorify my Saviour? Zech. vii. 6. If I did any good to the poor, was it done with a right motive? What *more* could I have done? Wherein ought I to have been more humble, more holy, more diligent, this day? Are these, reader, some of the questions on which you and your own heart converse together? Or are you a stranger to your own conscience? Most earnestly we beseech you to be so no longer. Let the love of a crucified Redeemer take full possession of your soul. Invite him to enter the temple of your heart, even though you know it to be polluted. His scourge of small cords will effectually cleanse it, John ii. 15; be not affrighted, they are cords of love, Hos. xi. 4. Rejoice to be purged. Thank him for so blessed a work, which you could never accomplish. Then ask him to enlarge your heart, as he cleanses it, that you may run in the way of his commandments, Psa. cxix. 32. Pray for the Spirit to quicken you, and to make your heart "*sound*" in the statutes of the Lord, ver. 80. Thus shall you be enabled to "serve" the Redeemer of your soul. Holy service, or earnest desire, and persevering attempt, thereafter, is the only sure proof that you belong to the number of Christ's seed. If, then, O reader, thou art not only a professing, but a serving, Christian, thou art one of Christ's posterity. To thee he looked forward when expiring on the cross; of thee he spake when he declared that a seed should "serve the Lord;" and in thee he beheld prospectively, he now sees actually, and shall hereafter see perfectly, of the travail of his soul, and was, and is, and shall be satisfied!

THE GATHERING.

VERSE 31.—*They shall come.*

THESE words set before us the certainty of what had been declared in the preceding verse, and unfold also the gradual gathering, and final meeting of the righteous seed. "THEY," that is, the seed; those who belong to Christ, who are accounted or reckoned to him for a posterity: those in whose hearts the seed of the word has been sown; who, having been born again by the Spirit of God, are reserved by the Great Husbandman to be the seed of the new heavens and the new earth: these "SHALL," in spite of all the efforts of the adversary; notwithstanding the temptations of the world, and their own many sins and daily short-comings; contrary to their own fears, and notwithstanding their manifest unworthiness; they shall, beyond all doubt, without a single loss, and with unfailing certainty, "COME;" that is, born of the flesh, they all arise, one after another, each in his proper season, during the progress of time; *born again* of the Spirit, John i. 13; iii. 7, they shall come, each in his appointed hour of the day of grace; and united together in one body, they shall ALL come in the consummation of glory.

They shall come one after another in time. However few may be the inhabitants of the earth, there shall be one of the seed of Christ among them: one on whom the eye of the great God may rest with delight, Zeph. iii. 17. However degenerate and corrupt this crowded world may become, there shall be found more or less of the good seed, bearing the fruits of righteousness, here and there amongst them. This is no doubtful matter. There was not more certainly a wicked Cain in the first family of only two brothers, than there was a righteous Abel. When the desponding prophet exclaimed amidst the multitudes of the ungodly, "I, even I, only am left;" He, that knew his own, could reply, "Yet have I reserved unto myself seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal," Rom. xi. 3, 4. It is even so. The seed shall come. Christ, from whom they spring, came in promise, and in person; so likewise do his seed. They were given to him in promise, by God the Father, before the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34; Eph. i. 4. Having come in the promise, they come also at the appointed time in the flesh.

Abel came, the first of mortal born that lived a righteous life, and died a righteous death. Abel once lived in the flesh, but he lived to God; his spirit drew near to the Most High by the appointed sacrifice; he came and was accepted; he sung the praises of the God he loved; he served him with a willing and steadfast obedience; and by faith looked forward to the promised Seed, which, doubtless, Eve had told him was his parents' confidence, Heb. xi. 4. Abel came thus in grace, as well as in time, and he shall also come in glory. No sooner did his mangled body fall in death, than his soul was received into life. He entered the world of spirits the first of all the redeemed. There his spirit would raise a song of thanksgiving which angels never heard before. Listening with admiration, they would pause for an instant that all heaven might learn the strain. Astonished beyond measure, they hear, for the first time, it may be, a song in which they cannot join; it is one which he alone can sing, of all the millions that surround the throne. And

Abel is singing that song. His soul has long enjoyed the abodes of the blessed, but so long also has it looked forward to the adoption, to wit, the redemption, of its body, Rom. viii. 23. It shall not expect in vain. When the Saviour comes in glory, the soul of Abel shall come in glory with him, to be reunited to its raised and incorruptible, its glorious and spiritual body, 1 Cor. xv. Then Abel, in the new heavens and the new earth, shall again sing the praises of that God whom he had loved and served in the earliest period of the departed world.

The first parents of our race shall also come. With penitential tears, we may suppose, did Adam and Eve seek admission again to the fair bloom of Eden. Confessing themselves to be sinners, and their condemnation to be just, they sued for its remission in the name of the promised Seed. Painfully conscious from whence they had fallen, and fatally taught that no created being can stand in his own righteousness, "can quicken or keep alive his own soul," they knelt as suppliants for mercy, through the imputed righteousness of the second Adam; and the sinful parents, while they lived, came, doubtless, in the name of their holy child Jesus, into the kingdom of God's grace, and at their death entered into the kingdom of God's glory, and joined the song of their beloved Abel. There they are now; and when the Saviour's glory is to be revealed, when the Almighty Father brings him forth, crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, their souls shall come as attendant trophies of his triumph, gracing the Conqueror's entry on his new possessions.

The patriarchs who lived before the deluge shall come. Amongst them Enoch, who was not, shall again be found. He walks now, among the redeemed souls in paradise, with a glorified and spiritual body, as before he walked among the sons of men with God and with a heavenly mind. His body sleeps not in the dust. He needs not the power of the resurrection morning. Mortality in him was swallowed up of life, 2 Cor. v. 4.

The preacher of righteousness, the father of the second world, shall come. When the wickedness of men waxed great, so that the Lord repented that he had made them, (Gen. vi. 6,) Noah came. He came to men for God, and reasoned with them of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. He came to God for man, and pled for mercy upon those who never asked for mercy upon themselves. He is one of the seed whom the Lord promised. He was the salt of his time; "Thee only have I seen righteous in this generation," Gen. vii. 11. The ungodly are to be destroyed, yet the seed must be reserved. An ark is ordered for him; and the longsuffering of God waited an hundred and twenty years, while the ark was preparing, 1 Pet. iii. 20. Noah came into the ark, and the flood came upon the world. The seed shall be safe; they shall be brought without loss even through the destruction of worlds, and shall eventually appear in peace in the kingdom of the saints, Dan. vii. 18, 22.

Abraham shall come. Though born in the country of the Chaldees, he shall be made willing to seek a better country, that is, an heavenly, Heb. xi. 16. The "father of the faithful" shall arise in the earth to preserve the name of the living God from being altogether blotted out. "He will command his children and his household after him to walk in the ways of the Lord." His faith shall be more severely tried than any man's, but he shall be brought out of the furnace, a vessel meet for the Master's everlasting use.

Isaac shall come. That double type of the Messiah shall be found, amongst the children of men. His long promised birth shall be accomplished at last. And as a sacrifice upon his father's altar, he shall prove an accepted offering, and become a picture of the resurrection, Heb. xi. 19.

Jacob shall come. Not more surely shall his brother Esau, after his own nature, love earthly things, and sell his birthright, than the other shall, by the implanted seed of the word, bear fruit of better desires, and be called a man of prayer; yea, no longer Jacob, but Israel, a prince that prevails with God, Gen. xxxii. 28.

Joseph, too, shall come, and his brethren also, the fathers of the tribes of Israel. Out of the pit, and out of the prison-house, he shall be brought, the type of Christ, the preserver of his brethren, who sold him, and the ruler over all the land.

Moses shall come. Out of the waters he shall be drawn, and not more surely shall he be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, than he shall be named the servant of the most High God. The dazzling honours of Egypt's kingdom shall be presented to his ambition, but he will esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all its treasures, Heb. xi. 26. The seed of a new and heavenly life shall bear within his heart its holy fruit; being brought out of bondage to sin, he shall lead out the people of Israel from the slavery of Egypt; he will conduct them through the Red Sea as upon dry land; and, after the wanderings of many years, shall bring them safe to the borders of Canaan. Moses, the picture of the law, cannot bring us into the heavenly Canaan. The law leads us to Christ, Gal. iii. 24, and there its office ceases, as did that of Moses on the borders of the land of promise; therefore,

Joshua shall come, the type of the true Joshua, or Jesus, Heb. iv. 8, to lead the seed into the chosen possession. There the preserved seed shall dwell in the reserved country; and in their various generations, the faithful and spiritual seed shall be found, not united, but intermingled, with their worldly and carnal brethren.

Time would fail to tell of all who came, and by the seed of a living faith, brought forth the fruits of righteousness, and glorified God amid the trials of a world that was not worthy of them, Heb. xi. 32—38.

When, too, the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son. The Seed of the woman appeared, Gal. iv. 4. The long promised heir did come. The life of the new creation by his double birth brought life and immortality to light. The seed, the one grain of pure wheat, fell into the ground, and died. It revived again, and brought forth much fruit, John xii. 24. It shall bring forth much. As certainly as they came in the generations that are passed, so surely shall they come in the generations that succeed. Together with his flesh, the Saviour laid aside the Jewish church, his representative body. And with his spiritual body, he took also to himself a new and spiritual representative, the Christian church.

From the height of Calvary's cross, he could look down the vista of futurity, and console his dying spirit with the vision of a Christian posterity, and exclaim, They shall come, "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise," Isa. xxvi. 19. The apostles, martyrs, and confessors came. The newly implanted seed was watered with their blood; and it grew, and became a fruitful tree. As time rolled on, its branches spread; and every succeeding season of a generation. it yielded abundantly. Not one year has it failed. Even on its outmost branch, the fruit, whose seed is in itself, was found. Eighteen hundred years have passed away, but still it has not ceased to bear. In this remote island of the sea, its boughs are strong, and its fruit cannot be numbered. Widely extended to the four corners of the earth are its branches, and none are wholly barren among them. We now behold in our world, what Christ predicted, what his dying eye beheld, with delight, in the vision of joy that was set before him on the cross. Then and there he was able to say, "They shall come." From the circumcised Jews, and the uncircumcised Gentiles, they shall be gathered into my church. From Ephesus, and Corinth, and Galatia, they shall come, with hearts purified from their unholy and debasing superstitions. The haughty Romans, too, shall bow to the doctrine of the cross. The sable sons of Africa and the East shall come to the obedience of the faith. The wide-extended lands shall acknowledge my name. Kings of the earth shall become the nursing fathers of my Church, and their queens her nursing mothers, Isa. xlix. 23. They shall come from the distant south, and the north shall not keep them back. The British isles shall be converted unto me, and shall become my willing messengers to the remotest nations. To every one of them for a witness shall the gospel be proclaimed, and then shall the end of my gospel kingdom come, and the commencement of my kingdom of glory.

Then, too, shall they come in the royal retinue of King Messiah. He will bring them all with him. He will show that he has gathered them safely, one after another, and at that glorious moment he shall collect them into one perfect, spotless company. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth,—Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," Psa. l. 3—5. Then the graves shall give up their pious dead; then the living saints shall be changed; and both together shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, 1 Thess. iv. 17. Then two in the field shall be separated. Two in one bed shall be suddenly parted. Of two at the mill, there shall be left but one. And why? because the time shall have arrived for the separation of the righteous from the wicked. Intermingled as now they are, there shall be then an instantaneous and everlasting separation, as these three illustrative cases represent. Then also shall be fulfilled the prophecy of the Saviour, "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God," Luke xiii. 28, 29; xvii. 34.

All the seed shall come. As certainly as each came in his proper season, during the progress of time, and the continuance of grace; so certainly shall they all come together in the consummation of glory. Nor these alone. From amongst the nominal professors of the Christian faith who shall be left, it may be, on the earth, a seed, we trust, shall come. Whilst the gathered spiritual Church is blessed with Christ on high, the nominal Church shall, in all probability, pass through fires of tribulation below. Doubtless the great Refiner will watch by the furnace, and bring out vessels fitted for his holy use. Even at that period, judging from analogy, God shall not want a witness for his truth, here and there throughout the earth. The Jews also shall be grafted into the tree of life. The Lord hath spoken it. "Therefore they shall come, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, and their soul shall be as a watered garden," Jer. xxxi. 12. The sweet fruits which it bears will gladden the whole world. "For if the casting away of them," because unfaithful branches, "be the reconciling of the Gentiles, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Rom. xi. 11—15. "Then shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea," Isa.

xi. 9. "All shall know him, from the least even to the greatest," Jer. xxxi. 34. Instead of a few here and there, as at former periods, that age shall produce the ripened harvest of righteousness, the holy seed shall be the substance thereof, Isa. vi. 12. Blessed shall be that time, and blessed shall be that people, for the meek shall inherit the earth, Matt. v. 5.

When the period of that earthly blessedness is completed, when every foe shall be subdued, and the last enemy, death itself, destroyed, then shall THEY ALL COME into the new heavens and the new earth. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth," Rev. xxi. 27. But there shall be gathered together all who have loved and served the Glorious God from the beginning to the end of time. In the glorious city shall they dwell. In the everlasting Presence they shall rejoice. No temple shall be able to contain the ransomed millions, and the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, shall be the temple of that new Jerusalem. God himself shall be with them, and be their God. They shall see his face. The Lamb shall feed them with his love, and lead them by the living and everlasting fountains, Rev. vii. 15—17, 21, 22. The once afflicted and crucified Jesus shall then see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied with an unutterable satisfaction, full and perfect in its nature, and eternal in its duration. It shall be the satisfaction of his sufferings, of his righteousness, of his providence, of his earnest desires, and of his inmost affections. It shall be a satisfaction of a new, uninterrupted, and increasing nature. When Christ presents himself, and all his seed, before the throne, and says, "Behold me, and the children thou hast given me," there shall exist in his bosom the full, lively, and unmeasured satisfaction of a paternal heart. Therefore is he called the everlasting Father, or Father of the ever lasting age, Isa. ix. 6. The head of a large family, he shall behold his own holy image in every one of them. Dwelling with them in the many prepared mansions of his Father's house, he will listen to their praises of that Father's name, and hear them ascribe all glory, and honour, and blessing, to the Triune Jehovah. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' Rev. vii. 9, 10.

THE EVERLASTING THEME

AND

OCCUPATION.

VERSE 31.—*And shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born.*

THE first clause of this verse, we have seen, refers to the seed, the spiritual children of the Lord Jesus. It asserts the certainty of their existence, and exhibits them as arriving on the stage of time, each in his proper season—introduced into the kingdom of grace, one after another, each at the appointed hour of his spiritual birth—and, all together, gathered into the kingdom of glory, not one lost or wanting among them.

This second clause discloses the high and blessed object for which they were brought into existence at first, and for which they are all united into one company for ever. It informs us that as the glory of God was the principal object of their life on earth, so it shall form the sole business of their eternal existence. Here at once, and in few words, is set before us their occupation, their theme, and the objects of their instruction, both in time and in eternity. The unity of God's purpose is thus exhibited; a true view of our present state and duty presented; and a glimpse of the heavenly life unfolded.

The occupation of the seed is "to declare"—testify from their own experience, from their own knowledge and conviction, that grand subject, theme, or lesson which they have learned. This theme is his "righteousness." The righteousness of God the Father, in his law, and in his providence, they will declare. To maintain the integrity and strictness of the one, and justify the chequered nature of the other, they will regard as their bounden duty. To silence all fretful murmurs in their own breasts, and in the breasts of others, against the dispensations of a wise and holy God, they will ever apply themselves, Psa. lxxiii. and xxxvii. They will avouch his righteousness in accepting the willing, but innocent substitute in the room of the guilty; in justifying through him the ungodly who believe, Rom. iii. 26; iv. 5; and in condemning all classes of men who commit sin, Rev. xxi. 8; Psa. xix. 9; cxlv. 17. They will declare the righteousness of God the Holy Ghost in his convictions of sin, reproofs of conscience, forsaking of the impenitent, and abiding with the believer. And, in a special manner, they will declare the righteousness of God the Son, in his human life, and sufferings, and death, as man's surety, by which he magnified the law and made it honourable, Isa. xlii. 21, and by which they are able to call him by this name, "The Lord our righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. And lastly, the objects of their instruction, those to whom this declaration of the righteousness of the Triune Jehovah is made by the seed, are thus pointed out, "A people that shall be born." The men of their generation, and especially the young, shall be the immediate objects to whom the seed will declare this righteousness, during their several sojourns on earth; and, when gathered together in one, to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, Eph. iii. 10, will they also declare it, as even now they are called to do; and, perhaps, to all the worlds of intelligent beings that shall successively be created throughout eternity, it may be their glorious privilege to furnish an instructive lesson of the righteousness of God in Christ.

Such seems to be the import of this passage. It represents the Saviour as looking with minute and intense interest into the joy that was set before him. From the cross on Calvary he could behold the remotest future, and present before his mind a picture of the completion of all things. His own Spirit had inspired this psalm, perhaps for him to use on this solemn occasion. In these concluding verses, it consoles his mind with gracious assurances and glorious prospects. It sets before him his own faithful seed, bearing witness to his love and righteousness through changing time and ceaseless eternity.

We understand the last two verses of this psalm to contain this double, rather this unlimited reference. It seemed necessary to explain the previous clause and verse, with regard to the seed, both individually and collectively, and we are bound to adhere to the same interpretation now. It might even be argued that, in strict propriety, the words cannot bear a limited signification. For being spoken of the seed generally, as something accomplished by every one of them, we must necessarily send forward our thoughts to that period when all the seed shall exist and be gathered into one, and when consequently they shall all be able to declare the righteousness of our Emmanuel. Thus, this clause, with the entire passage in which it occurs, obtains full, adequate, and most satisfactory explanation, by referring its signification to the church militant, and to the church triumphant.

We ought ever to bear in remembrance that the true Church is a spiritual body, and that the universal Church of all ages is *one.* The great object to be effected by her is also *one*, namely, "to show forth the praises of him who hath called her out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Alas! how inadequately has this duty been discharged! What a sad sight must the Church present to the high intelligences, till she shall be freed from her divisions, gathered to her Lord, and made perfect in the unity of holiness!

The employment of the Church of God, from the beginning, has been the same as should occupy her now, and onward for ever. True believers, in all countries and periods, have been diligent to declare the righteousness of their God and Saviour. This was considered by them all, to be their most incumbent duty, the one great object for which life was valuable, and the highest privilege and honour, to which they could be here advanced. They testified for God to all around them, and more especially to the young. Over their own children, they watched with unwearied care, and early instructed them in the way of righteousness. To deliver the "people that are born" from the error and ignorance, and from the sinful customs and practices of the world around them, has always been a distinguishing characteristic of the Church of God. With maternal solicitude she seeks the welfare of the souls of children, and thus tenderly instructs each of them, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," Eccles. xii. 1. The great Father of all has made this a special subject of his injunctions, "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," Deut. vi. 6, 7. Is not this the reason which God assigns for his communing with Abraham, and revealing to him his purpose? "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham, that which he hath spoken of him," Gen. xviii. 19. Was not Noah called a preacher of righteousness? He fulfilled this duty to the people of that wicked generation; but none, save his own family, were brought with him out of the destruction of the deluge into the safety of the ark.

It was the invariable practice of the spiritual seed, during the continuance of the Jewish Church, to declare the righteousness of God. Even in the time of their greatest corruption, Malachi testifies that "then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. Doubtless, also, they spake words of warning to the ungodly around them, and watched over the young, seeking to impress their hearts ere yet the allurements of the world had fatally ensnared them. How fully and faithfully does the Christian Church follow in the same path! See how our gracious Head set her the example. To all with whom he met or conversed, the Saviour declared the righteousness of God, as well as testified of the world that the words thereof were evil, John vii. 7. How often do we find him with children around him, and with children following him. Do we not rejoice to hear him say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not?" Matt. xix. 14. And when this great and good Shepherd was about to leave his earthly flock, the first of his threefold injunctions to all ministers, through Peter, is this, "Feed my lambs," John xxi. 15. The early Christians were particularly attentive to this duty, and greatly did the Lord bless them in it. Timothy is reminded by St. Paul that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, and is enjoined not to forget of whom he had learned them. Doubtless the apostle referred to his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, in whom dwelt an unfeigned faith, 2 Tim. i. 5; iii. 15.

The history of the true and spiritual Church of Christ is one continued narrative of God-honouring and sin-condemning Christians. The Church is an embodied testimony. Every member of it ought to be a witness and a testifier for God. The two things in which they especially differ from the world around them are these—they seek to bring men to the Saviour by declaring his righteousness as the only ground of their salvation; and they desire to exclude and banish sin by testifying against it in every form, 2 Tim. ii. 19. This is the duty in which every real Christian is engaged at the present day. As ministers or people, as parents or children, as masters or servants, and in whatever station of life they be, they make it their aim to declare the righteousness of the Lord Jesus as the only ground of a sinner's acceptance, and the only source of his sanctification. The Holy Scriptures they make the basis of all learning, and exhibit Jesus and his righteousness as the first and last object of knowledge. What we are now privileged to witness of the increase of vital godliness, and faithful declaration of the truth as it is in Jesus, was contemplated with satisfaction by our dying Lord. He could fix his eye on every self-denying effort which the most humble Christian is now making on behalf of the cause of truth and righteousness. It imparted joy to the last moments of our dying Master to know, that though a multitude was then despising him, multitudes would now, and in every age, render him a willing and most cordial service. He could not only contemplate the present generation, he could look also to all that shall succeed. His omniscient eye could survey them all to the end of time, and with full certainty of the fact, and blessed gratification at the event, he could exclaim, "They shall come, and shall declare my righteousness unto a people that shall be born."

Reader, it is a solemn question, but, for our soul's good, we should not fail to inquire, each of ourselves, Did my Lord and Master, thus looking forward from the cross, behold me amongst the number of those who declare his righteousness? Evade not this question by saying, that thou art not called to any office in the Church. Ministers have, indeed, the solemn responsibility of *publicly* declaring the righteousness of the Redeemer; and woe be to us, if we cannot answer this question affirmatively, as in the sight of God. But, as a professing Christian, the duty is incumbent on thee to declare by thy *private* life and conversation, that the righteousness of Jesus the Surety, is that alone by which thine own soul and those of thy fellow men can be saved. Alas! how few consider the weighty obligations under which they lie! For all that we know of right and truth by the Scriptures, and for the use we make of it for our own souls, and the souls of those with whom we meet in the intercourse of life, we must give an account to God. Do we allow our wives and children, our friends and neighbours, our servants and dependants, to continue in ignorance of the things that belong unto their peace? Do we suffer them to remain in error on the most important of all questions, the salvation of their souls? Alas! how many a master has retained a servant for years, and never told him that an immortal soul was lodged within him! Let it not be so. Let not the wife of thy bosom be constrained to declare, that she never heard thee say there was a heaven to seek, or a hell to shun. Let not the children God has given thee, rise up in the judgment, and testify that they were not taught to pray, or to know and love that Saviour who had finished a work of righteousness. Let not thy friends and servants go unwarned from day to day, but faithfully declare to them the way of righteousness, and entreat them to walk therein, that they may find peace and salvation to their souls.

Blessed is that resolution of the Psalmist, "I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works; men shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness," Psa. cxlv. 5, 7. "We will not hide them from our children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." For "he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments," Psa. lxxviii. 4—7. This is the duty and privilege of the church. Since Christ ascended, one generation of the seed has been telling another, and they those that came after, of the Lord Jesus, his holy life, sufferings, and death. One word comprehends all; they declare his "*righteousness*." That perfect and spotless life of obedience to all the will and law of God, which Christ exhibited on earth, and which enabled him to offer a pure offering of holy blood, and to give an unstained soul in ransom for a world's redemption, is their grand theme. This is the work of the church in her several members. In her collective capacity, it is intended that she should afford an everlasting lesson to all the inhabitants of the universe who are, or shall be created. "Ye are the light of the world," Matt. v. 14. They shall look upon the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and they shall glorify God in her. She shall be at once the Teacher and the Lesson. And it is not improbable that there shall be called into existence, throughout eternity, various races of intelligent beings, who shall learn by the glorified church the manifold wisdom of God. How fully and perfectly shall the redeemed be able then to declare the righteuosness of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! They shall know, as they are known. No longer beholding through a glass, darkly, they shall understand what is now mysterious, and approve what is now hard to bear. Their eye shall shed no tear; for their heart shall feel no sorrow. The past shall all be explained; and, in the light of eternity, they shall be able to bring forth glory to the Lord from every part of it. Jesus, by his Spirit, shall be their Eternal Instructor. "He will dwell with them." They shall see his face. As the Lord their God, he will give them light. With them he will look back to the manger of Bethlehem, the garden of Gethsemane, and the cross of Calvary: and with them he will be fully satisfied with the meanness of the one, the anguish of the second, and the desertion and death of the last. With them also will he look back to their own places of nativity, their periods of birth, their country, and their kindred. The trials that were sanctified, the seen and unseen dangers to which they were exposed, and the amount of undeserved blessings that were vouchsafed, shall be rehearsed. The means of their conversion, the preservation of their faith, and the time and circumstances of their death, shall be fully remembered. In the abundance of their satisfaction, the redeemed shall exclaim, "He hath done all things well. The covenant was ordered in all things and sure. Not one pang too many. Not a sorrow too great. Not a trial too severe. From the cradle to the grave, all was right, and wise, and good!" The minister and the missionary shall say, "We have not laboured in vain, nor spent our strength for nought!" The parent shall exclaim, "My prayers have not been lost upon my child." The tried and afflicted Christian shall acknowledge that his trials were his greatest blessings. All classes among the saved shall be PERFECTLY AND ETERNALLY SATISFIED. In the gladness and gratitude of their hearts, they shall come to the throne of glory. Arrayed in white robes, faultless and spotless in body and soul, bright and comely with the comeliness of the imputed righteousness of their Head and Saviour, they shall there present themselves, cast their crowns before him, and strike their golden harps, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Rev. v. 13.

THE FINISHER OF THE FAITH.

Verse 31.—*That he hath done this*, or, *for he hath fulfilled it.**

These words express the concluding argument—the triumphant termination, of this psalm. Here is assigned the reason, why the seed shall be able to declare, with truth, the righteousness of their Lord and Saviour. During the period of time, while they severally sojourn in this world, and throughout their everlasting existence in the new heavens and the new earth, this shall be their theme, the finished righteousness of Emmanuel; this their occupation, to declare and celebrate the perfected work of the eternal redemption; and this their all-convincing and conclusive argument, "for he hath fulfilled it."

The statement in this passage will powerfully recall to the Christian's recollection, the dying exclamation of his Saviour, "It is finished," John xix. 30. We have already seen, that our Lord quoted the commencement of this Psalm, with the first "loud voice," which he uttered on the cross. We have observed that throughout the entire Psalm, all the sentiments bear a direct and close reference to what he then experienced, and that many of the expressions of sorrow and joy which it contains, are expressly applied to him in the New Testament. Therefore, in harmony with the view which we have taken of this Psalm, that our Lord inwardly repeated its several verses, we now conclude that in his second "loud voice," when he exclaimed "It is finished," the Redeemer had reference to the termination of this Psalm, in which his church is represented as declaring his righteousness, and proving its finished and perfect excellency by his triumphant argument, "for he hath fulfilled it."

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* The Hebrew verb, in this passage, is synonymous with our English verb, *to do*, the various significations of which, as perform, execute, transact, finish, conclude, are too well known to be enumerated. (See Johnson's large Dictionary.) In different passages of our admirable translation, it is thus rendered; *make*, Dan. ix. 24; *make ready, dress, prepare*, as a sacrifice, Ezek. xlv. 17; 1 Kings xviii. 23; Numb. xv. 5, 6, 8, 12; *offer*, that which has been so prepared, Lev. ix. 7; *effect*, Jer. xlviii. 30; *execute*, Exod. xii. 12; *perform*, Jer. xliv. 25; and, as it is here translated, *fulfil*, Psa. cxlv. 19; cxlviii. 8; 1 Chron. xxii. 13; 2 Sam. xiv. 22 The authors of the Hebrew New Testament have also given it this sense in Acts xiii. 22; Eph. ii. 3; and Rev. xvii. 7.

This is the standing position of the church of Christ, in time and in eternity: Her Lord, in her name, and in her nature, fulfilled all righteousness. The powers of evil can no longer boast. Their exultations over fallen man are put to silence. One of our race has kept the law; yea, he has magnified it; yea, he has made it honourable, Isa. xlii. 21. A man has been found, who, from his cradle to his grave, never thought an evil thought, or spake an idle word, or omitted a single duty, or transgressed the will of God in the slightest particular. A man has been found, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," who "was tempted and tried in all points, like as we are," and yet remained "without sin," Heb. iv. 15. Yea, against whom all the wickedness of man, and all the power and malice of the hosts of darkness were let loose: on whose single persons, in body and soul, were concentrated every conceivable, and inconceivable, pain, and sorrow, and anguish; and who, in the last and most trying hour of his dissolution, was forsaken by the comforting presence of his Father and his God: and yet, under all these, never uttered a murmur or impatient exclamation; and, in opposition to them all, persevered in the narrow path of duty, still loving, still obeying his absent Father; praying for man, his murderer; repudiating Satan, his tempter; and, in the midst of excruciating torments, attending to the minutest particular of Scripture, and saying, "I thirst," in order that it might be fulfilled; and then, with a "loud voice," that heaven and earth might hear, and challenge, if they could, his perfected righteousness, exclaiming, before he bowed his head, "It is finished."

If the view here given, be correct, this concluding passage of the Psalm serves to explain that concluding sentiment of our Saviour's mortal life. This verse informs us, that when he said, "It is finished," he signified thereby that his "righteousness was fulfilled."

The term "righteousness," strictly denotes conformity to law. When we wish to express what Christ was in himself, we not only state that he was righteous, but something more; we affirm that he was holy—"the Holy One of God." His righteousness proceeded from his holiness. It was his holy nature exhibiting itself in acts, cognizable and commendable by law, that constituted his righteousness. Our Lord, as the Surety of sinners, was under two laws, the law of the curse, and the law of the commandments. To each of these his obedience was full and perfect; his righteousness is, therefore, twofold, passive and active. Under the law of the curse, he passed more than thirty years, with perpetual and perfect endurance. For CONSIDER HIM that ENDURED such contradictions against himself—pains and trials, labour and sweat, poverty and hunger; sorrows, griefs, and disappointments; weariness, fatigue, and exhaustion; shame, despite, and spitting; reproach, distress, and persecution; the forsakings of friends, the jestings of fools, and the persecutions of enemies; accused of the worst of crimes, and of being a consorter with the worst of company; cited before the highest tribunals in the land; solemnly condemned in the spiritual court, for the greatest sins against the law of God, of which man can be guilty—the dreadful crimes of descending, as it were, to the lowest hell, by necromantic league with Beelzebub, and of aspiring to the highest heaven, by blasphemously making himself equal with God; and sentenced in the criminal court for the highest offence which could be committed against the law of the land, namely, sedition and treason; subjected after each sentence to the most insulting, and abusive treatment; mocked and struck; blindfolded and buffeted; scourged on the back, crowned with thorns on the head, and arrayed with a fool's ensigns of royalty. CONSIDER HIM in all this, and how he ENDURED to be led away to a painful, lingering, and ignominious, death; to be hung upon a cross like a common malefactor; and, worse than these, while under the curse of man and the law, to be afflicted by the most trying of all sorrows, the hiding of his Father's countenance; and you shall behold the passive righteousness of the Son of God, shining forth, calm and undisturbed, like the silent moon amid the storms of night. Clouds encompass, winds roar, and tempests rage; but every glimpse we obtain of her silver light serves only to exhibit the queen of heaven more lovely, clear, and unruffled, in the composure of majesty. Such was the passive righteousness of Jesus Christ. He never fretted at the prosperity of the wicked, or felt disconcerted at their frown. He murmured not at trials, nor grew angry at disappointments. A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, he yet knew not either impatience, or discontent. There was no sullenness, and no selfishness, in his nature. Though ready to forgive, he was not quick to resent. And amidst the strife of tongues that vied in reviling him, he reviled not again. "Like a sheep, dumb before her shearers, so he opened not his mouth." Like a lamb led to the slaughter, in simplicity and silence, he used no guile for his escape. And, when death was tranfixing him with its sharpest stings, he endured the most piercing of them all without a single murmur. Thus every sorrow, trial, and suffering, which the law of the curse had denounced, and which the Scriptures of truth had foretold, were endured by Christ in the most holy and innocent manner. His passive obedience, or righteousness, was proved to be immaculate and perfect. He had neither sinned, nor come short in the smallest particular which the law of the curse prescribed, but had fulfilled it to the very uttermost.

The active righteousness of Christ, consists in his having fully discharged all his obligations as a Surety, all the requirements of the law as a man, and all the commands of God, as an obedient servant, and a willing sacrifice. To state it in a few words, we may say, that his heart, and life, overflowed with love to God and man ; that he perfectly fulfilled those two commandments, on which hang all the law and the prophets ; for he loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and with all his mind, and he loved his neighbour as he loved himself. The duty of every relationship, by which he stood connected with his fellow-men, he discharged to the utmost When a youth, he was subject to his parents, and obedient unto them, Luke ii. 51. When a man, he evaded not his duty to the state, but wrought a miracle, that he might pay the tribute, that was levied upon him. In his intercourse with men, the law of kindness was on his tongue, and gifts and blessings dropped from his hand. From the first dawn of reason, to the commendation of his departing spirit, he always bethought, with alacrity, that he must be about his Father's business. Wherever he went, into whatsoever company he came, this was his first and only inquiry, What can I now do for God? How shall I benefit these immortal souls? Christ was always at his post; he never lost a single opportunity of warning a sinner, instructing an inquirer, or relieving the distressed. The active obedience of the Saviour towards man is thus summed up in Scripture, "He went about doing good," Acts x. 38. In regard to God, his religion, his life, his righteousness, were of the most perfect, energetic, and fervent kind. He rested not in the outward form, nor neglected, or despised, the holy rites of religion. As his custom was, he went into the synagogue every sabbath-day, Luke iv. 16, and worshipped the God of the Hebrews, in their sacred language and services. On the solemn festivals, he presented himself in the temple at Jerusalem, as the law commanded, and never failed to yield the most complete, and cordial obedience to the divinely-appointed ordinances. His was a spiritual worship. His soul slumbered not in the outward ceremonies, but ascended, through them, into the highest communion with God. The private duties of his religion, were discharged with an active vigour, and fulness of heart. There was no delay, no procrastination of prayer; no wandering of thought, no dulness of mind, no coldness of affection. In the morning, he rose up a great while before day, that he might be alone in prayer with God, Mark i. 35. At times he continued all night, pouring out his soul in fervent supplications, Luke vi. 14. Never omitting the duties of prayer and fasting, he was always ready and prepared, for the mightiest miracle of mercy that might be required of him, Matt. xvii. 21. Living and breathing for the glory of God, he moved amongst men and devils untouched by sin, and was acknowledged by both to be the Holy One of God, Mark i. 24; Luke iv. 34; Acts iii. 14. Every moment of his life, he possessed the most unhesitating readiness to accomplish all that his Father commanded: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart," Psa. xl. 8. He came to Jordan to be baptized of John; and his argument with this humble and declining minister prevailed, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." And upon HIM who had performed this work of righteousness, in such a self-denying and God-honouring spirit, the Holy Ghost descended like a dove; "and, lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 15, 17. When he ascended Mount Tabor, and was transfigured in glory, the same voice uttered the same declaration, proving that his righteousness in the sight of God was perfect and complete. Thus, by a testimony from heaven on two occasions; by the admission of his watchful enemies that they were at a loss how to lay hold of him; by the contradictions of the witnesses whom they suborned to accuse him; by the solemn asseveration of the judge who condemned him, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person," Matt. xxvii. 24; and by the affirmation of one of the dying malefactors, "This man hath done nothing amiss," Luke xxiii. 41; we conclude with the most triumphant assurance, that, in the sight of God and man, the active righteousness of Jesus Christ is pure, spotless, and perfect; bright with the lustre of its excellency; yea, clear as the sun, resplendent and beautiful before the throne of God with the brightness and purity of its effulgence; the admiration of heaven; the glorious light of the eternal day; and therefore, with all the emphasis of truth, is HE to whom it belongs, rightly denominated, "THE SUN OF

RIGHTEOUSNESS," who rises on a dark and benighted world, and imparts a healing warmth, and light, and life with his unsullied ray, Mal. iv. 2.

Having now considered the finished righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as it is in itself, let us direct our attention to it in relation to ourselves. We have remarked that it was of a passive nature, enduring the law of the curse; and of an active nature, fulfilling the law of the commandments; and we now further add, that it was a Surety-righteousness; that is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all righteousness, not in his own name, or for his own benefit, but in our name, and on our behalf. Let us remember that Christ's life in the flesh was entirely gratuitous. He needed not to become man, but he did so out of love to us. After he took our nature, he needed not to act righteous acts in order to become righteous; for he already possessed that essential and perfect holiness, which is the fountain of all righteousness, either of law commanding, or of goodness obeying; but yet, from love to us, he did perform all manner of righteous works. His intention therein was to produce and provide a perfect righteousness in the name of man; and to give it forth as a second Adam, in place of that unrighteousness which had been transmitted by the first Adam. Therefore without consulting any man, he took our name; without waiting our solicitation, he voluntarily undertook our bankrupt cause; and having conducted it to a successful issue, he now invites us to become partakers of the benefits and privileges he has acquired. Our cause of bankruptcy was sin. To meet the penalty we had incurred, our Surety gave his life a sacrifice; and for the debt we owed, he paid his righteousness as a price. Having undergone our death, he came forth from the prison of the grave, ascended into the hill of the Lord, and presented himself in the holy place before the Most

High: there, in the court of heaven, he claimed, in his own right, that the name of man should be again restored to the book of life. He stood there as a man; he could challenge the universe to disprove his claim. Of all the human race, his hands alone were clean, his heart pure; no thought of his soul had ever turned on vanity; and without deceit or guile, he had faithfully fulfilled to the very utmost all that will of God which he had sworn to accomplish. Therefore, in justice, he received that blessing which he sought from the Lord, and obtained the palm of righteousness from the God of his salvation, Psa. xxiv. The name of man was again registered in heaven; and the good news of our redemption, through the righteousness of this Surety, was commanded to be proclaimed to all nations for the obedience of faith, Rom. i. 5. He who refuses to believe what this Surety has accomplished for him, will naturally attempt, if he at all desire to be saved, to perform it for himself; but till he shall have fulfilled all righteousness, and can prove before God and man, that from his cradle to his grave, his hands were clean, and his heart pure, this attempt will only aggravate his ruin. He, on the other hand, who believes in this gracious Surety, who acknowledges his own utter failure, and accepts the "gift of righteousness," Rom. v. 17, which Jesus bestows, does not attempt to do any thing towards the attainment of that which has already been so perfectly accomplished, but he rests on it, as all his salvation and all his desire. Filled with gratitude, he now works to show his love to Christ, not selfishly to merit his gifts. His religion becomes a service of love—a holy and a happy life. The name by which he now addresses the blessed Redeemer is, The Lord my righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. The rights of the head become the rights of the members. The name of the husband is conferred upon the wife, Jer. xxiii. 16. The satisfaction and gladness of the Christian's heart at this discovery of a finished salvation by a Surety-righteousness, and of everlasting union and betrothment with Christ therein, are so transporting that he exclaims, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness: as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels," Isa. lxi. 10.

The doctrine of substitution, or imputation, is the life of the Christian. My sins were laid on the head of Jesus; that is, they were imputed to him by God the Father, Isa. liii. 6. Jesus willingly became my substitute, suffered in my room, and died in my stead. In the eye of the law, I am regarded as one who has paid its penalty, suffered its curse, and died under its sentence. I am therefore become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, Rom. vii. 4. It cannot lay hands upon me, and execute me twice. I was crucified with, and in Christ, under the curse of the law. What more, then, can it demand? The law of our land cannot justly apprehend an individual a second time for the same offence, after he has either suffered its recorded sentence, or been acquitted as innocent at its bar. Nor will the law of God lay hold on Christ again, nor can it seize on me; for it was only and expressly as my Surety that he died; it was with the full permission of the Judge and Lawgiver, and with the covenanted consent of the Great Creditor, that he acted in my name, and laid down his life for mine. In the eye of the law, therefore, I am discharged in Christ my Surety, because it has executed all its wrath and sentence upon him. It laid him in the dead; but he took to himself a new life, and I, therefore, ought to reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto

God, through Jesus Christ my Lord, Rom. vi. 11. With full truth also may I say with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20.

The full statement of the gospel is comprehended in one word, ATONEMENT. A Surety has appeared. He has offered himself as a sacrifice, and placed himself as a mediator between God and man, 1 Tim. ii. 5. He has atoned for the misdeeds of the one, and satisfied the justice of the other. God and man ought therefore to be again at one; for the atonement, or the at-one-ment, has been fully accomplished. God, on his part, has cordially accepted that atonement. It was his kindness that suggested it, his goodness that allowed the substitution to stand good in law. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," John iii. 16. Nothing more, therefore, is required to be done, in order to incline God's heart towards a reconciliation. He has accepted the atonement, and retains no feeling but that of good-will towards men. The Scriptures, accordingly, never affirm that God must be reconciled to man, but, on the contrary, represent God as entreating man to be reconciled to him. The enmity lies on man's side, not on that of the Most High. The change to be effected must be in the heart of the offender, not in that of the offended. The ministry of reconciliation, therefore, is distinctly, even in legal phraseology, thus defined, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 19—21. It is man, then, that is called upon in this passage to be reconciled to God, to be again at one with him. It is we who are invited to accept the atonement, and to feel, and to act, as those who are satisfied that it has made up the breach between them and God. Too many conceive that Christ was accomplishing a work in order to make the Father favourable to man, as though Christ were more merciful than he; but this Scripture positively declares of God the Father, that he was in Christ, reconciling this world of ours unto himself, not imputing unto us our trespasses. The Father laid them upon the head of his Son. Jesus cordially took our guilt, and suffered as our substitute. We are called upon to "accept this punishment of our iniquity," Lev. xxvi. 41. We are besought to lay our hands on the head of this substituted victim, and to confess over him all our iniquities, and all our transgressions, in all our sins, Lev. xvi. 21. We thus make a covenant with God, by means of the sacrifice, Psa. l. 5. This covenant is, that, since he has so graciously accomplished all this redemption-work for us, which we cordially and gratefully accept at his hands, we will unreservedly present our bodies and souls, our time and talents, to Him, as our reasonable service, the only return we can make for such glorious and gratuitous kindness, and the only proof we can give of our confidence in his word, our acceptance of his sacrifice, and our gratitude for his benefits. See Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Rom. vi. 11, 12, &c. This is the salvation of the soul. This is the reconciliation, the at-one-ment, attaining its full effect. A principle is thus introduced into the human heart, which produces hatred against all sin. The end of Christ's death, as our Surety, is accomplished: "We are made the righteousness of God in him." Being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we begin to learn to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, Luke i. 74, 75. We recognize how appropriately our Surety is named, "Jesus," because he saves his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21. We no longer regard the work of Christ as something done to obtain for us merely a place of safety, but to introduce us to a state of holiness. Instead of hoping that Christ may save us from hell at our death, we are chiefly anxious to be delivered from the love, and from the commission, of sin while we live. And with greater earnestness of desire, we long and pray for the restoration of God's image to our souls, than for bare admission to the happiness of heaven. Man is thus brought to be of one mind with God. Formerly, he meant only safety and happiness by the term "salvation;" now, he understands its full signification to be restoration to purity and holiness. While natural men set themselves to "work out their own salvation," that is, their safety, with slavish "fear and trembling," lest after all they should be lost; he comes to the Saviour as one who is lost already, and, from love and gratitude to that Saviour, applies himself with perseverance and alacrity to work out his salvation; that is, his deliverance from pollution, his restoration to holiness. He does so "with fear and trembling," because he feels the power and multiplicity of sin within him; because he knows that he cannot, of himself, either be willing or able to eradicate it; and because he has learned that it is God alone who can work in him, first to will, and then to do, of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 12. Therefore he is ever fearful lest he grieve the blessed Spirit, and quench his light and convictions; he wrestles in agony of contention against every species of sin; trembles to think what little progress he is making in holiness, and what a deceitful and powerful enemy is lodged within his bosom. Thus "fearful and trembling" in regard to his own workings, the Christian's peace and confidence flow entirely from the knowledge of his Surety's finished righteousness; which assures him that the Lord works not an imperfect work, but that what good thing he hath begun in him, he will perform until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 6; Psa. cxxxviii. 8. Therefore, with the apostle, his life, his religion, consists mainly of three things: he worships God in the spirit, he rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3. And with another apostle, he casts himself for support entirely on his Lord and Master, saying, "Now unto him that is able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Jude 24, 25.

Such, Christian reader, is the result of the finished work of our Emmanuel. "The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 17. Has it produced this "effect" upon your soul? Or, are you labouring after peace, not believing Him who says, "My peace I give unto you?" John xiv. 27. Are you "going about," in all your religious duties, to establish a righteousness of your own, or have you submitted yourself to the righteousness of God? "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 3, 4. You doubtless wish for admission to the realms of glory. —Those who receive, who accept of, the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life, by one, Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17. Do you engage in works of charity, in order that God may count you a righteous person, and worthy of reward?—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, (through the provided

Surety,) his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5. Come, then, to the Lord Jesus, who is at once the author and the finisher of the faith, Heb. xii. 2. Accept of him as given. He is made of God unto you righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30. Receive him into your heart, and call him ever hereafter, The Lord your righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. Count, then, with the apostle, count all things to be loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of such a Saviour. Yea, count every thing as dross, that you may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. 8, 9. Thus in Christ shalt thou be made a new man, created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. iv. 24. Through him thy soul shall be united unto God; "he will betroth thee unto him in righteousness," Hos. ii. 19. Thou shalt be counted a member of the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Arrayed in the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints, Rev. xix. 8, thou shalt be a welcome guest at the marriage-supper of the Lamb; and, as an inhabitant of the new Jerusalem, the brightness of thy unsullied purity shall be an object of everlasting admiration to all angelic beholders; yea, rather, the Lord of the glorious church shall be admired in the perfect comeliness of all her members, 2 Thess. i. 10; Ezek. xvi. 14; Eph. v. 27. Many shall inquire, Who are these? And the reply shall be, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God," Rev. vii. 14, 15.

SUMMARY.

This Psalm, Christian reader, which we have now considered, has fixed our thoughts on the Saviour of the world, and unfolded to us, as it were, his secret feelings and inmost thoughts during the latter part of that awful period in which he hung upon the cross. After almost three hours of silence, in which he endured the conflict of the powers of darkness, suffered inconceivably acute mental anguish under the hidings of his Father's face, the Saviour uttered, and this psalm had recorded, his astounding cry, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" Here we considered the Lord Jesus, as our Surety, standing at his Father's judgment-seat, and, conscious of innocence, inquiring what new charge was laid against him, to cause this new and severest of all afflictions, the hiding of his Father's countenance. We concluded that one reason why our Lord so earnestly cried to his Father was, that he might ascribe the glory of his deliverance to him, being unwilling to appropriate it to himself by an exertion of his own power; and we found that the whole verse comprised three inquiries, to which we conceived these to be appropriate answers: 1. Why hast thou forsaken me? Because thou art bearing the sins of the world. 2. Why art thou so far from helping me? That the victory may be altogether thine own. And, 3. Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring? That thou mayest learn all the obedience by the things which thou art suffering. We perceived that our Lord in continuing his supplications, complained *to* his Father, but would not complain *against* him; and yet instantly acquitted him of unkindness or injustice, and subioined this filial and beautiful acknowledgment, "But thou continuest holy." In the fulness of his sorrow, our Lord next contrasted his own experience with that of the fathers, whose prayers were heard, whose expectations were not confounded: he denominated himself a worm, allied by his human nature to the meanest part of creation; a scarlet-coloured worm, covered with the imputed guilt of men: and regarded himself as "no man;" not what man now is by sin, nor what man was intended to be by his Creator. Our Lord's life in the flesh, we saw, might be illustrated by the heathen doctrine of metempsychosis; for he brought the recollections of the world of glory into this state of being; and therefore human life must have appeared, in his eyes, infinitely more mean, wretched, and loathsome, than we can possibly conceive. We were next led to contemplate the enumerated mental sufferings of our much-tried Lord, the reproaches with which he was assailed, the mockery by which he was insulted, and the taunts which wounded his spirit to the quick. In the ninth and tenth verses, we considered that pathetic and touching appeal which our dying Redeemer made to the heart of his Father, arguing from the helplessness of his infancy to the helplessness of his manhood, and casting the latter upon that Paternal care, which had provided for the former. We perceived how earnestly our Lord followed up this appeal with renewed entreaty for his Father's presence, expressing this great and only desire of his heart in these words, "Be not far from me." The bodily sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, were next brought to our notice. The assault and encompassing of his enemies on every side, was the first particularized; where also we considered the assault of Satanic hosts upon the spirit of our Lord. Consequent on this assault succeeded universal faintness over his frame, complete languor and extreme exhaustion, with intense and burning thirst. The piercing of our Lord's sacred body in his hands and feet, was then considered, and the lingering death by crucifixion described. Extended on the cross, the emaciated state of the Saviour's worn-out frame was exposed to view, and all his bones might be told. In this condition he was subjected to the insulting gaze of the multitude; the soldiers also seized every article of his clothing, parted his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture. Urged by these various and sore afflictions, and desiring with intense anxiety to enjoy again, before he died, the light and peace of his Father's presence, our blessed Saviour then, with the most vehement importunity, prayed for a speedy and immediate answer. And, whilst he was yet praying, his Father granted his petition. Light dawned upon his soul; darkness was dispelled from the face of nature, and from the heart of the Redeemer; and, as though issuing from a kind of spiritual death, and enjoying a spiritual resurrection, our Divine Surety exclaimed, "Thou hast heard me." Importunity prevailed with God. The whole tone of feeling and sentiment, in the Psalm, became changed from this verse. Gratitude and thanksgiving, we observed, occupied its remaining portion. The Saviour, as it were, invited from the cross the members of his Church to join his eucharistic song; called them his "brethren" to whom he would declare his Father's name; and testified that God is worthy to be praised, because he had not hid his face from him, but had heard his prayer, and answered his cry. Therefore he himself again expressed his determination to praise the Lord, and to fulfil all his vows in the presence of the redeemed. Our blessed Saviour was next presented to our view as contemplating the vision of joy that was set before him—casting a long look through successive time into the eternal age, and beholding with delight all things gathered together in himself, Eph. i. 10. He contemplated the satisfaction of his meek and lowly disciples; the seekers of the Lord, all praising him; and the eternal spiritual life which they should enjoy; then the conversion of the world, the establishment of his own glorious kingdom, the universal worship which should be rendered to him by all classes of human beings, and their entire dependence on himself, even in their most holy and exalted condition, as the alone Author of the faith. And lastly, the Psalm represented the Saviour as solacing his dying spirit in the midst of his enemies, with the assurance of a holy and numerous seed, who should be counted to him for a posterity. These his children, the fruit of the travail of his soul, he beheld, with satisfaction, faithfully serving God in every age of the world; and, without fail, coming, each in his proper and appointed hour, into his kingdom of grace, and all, at last, gathered together into his hingdom of glory. Their theme in time and in eternity is one; their occupation also is one, to "declare" to all that surround them, or that rise up under them, in time; and to all the principalities and powers that behold them, or worlds of intelligent beings that shall be created after them, throughout eternity, the unsullied and accepted Surety-righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, which completely secures their everlasting salvation, for he hath fulfilled it all.

"Now to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Jude 25.

THE END.

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